These films are divided into three categories that coincide with our studies: “films of India, South and Southeast Asia”, “films of China and Korea” and “films of Japan”. Each student is required to review this list and select SIX films - TWO from India, TWO from China/Korea, and TWO from Japan - that he/she would be interested in watching and writing a critical review about. (A student may also choose a film not on the list and discuss it with me so that I can consider whether it is a suitable choice for the assignment.) Each student must submit a PRIORITIZED list of those SIX films no later than the beginning of class on Wednesday, January 30 (Monday/Wednesday class)/Thursday, January 31 (Tuesday/Thursday class). Any student who does not submit this list by this date will not have a film to review. These choices will be reviewed and each student will be assigned ONE particular film. DVDs will be available for check-out during my office hours. Once the assignments are made, each student will be expected to watch the assigned movie and to compose a three- to four-page (a minimum of 900 words) critical review that addresses the central question of "How would a student in this class benefit by watching this film - what would a student gain?"

**FILMS of INDIA, SOUTH and SOUTHEAST ASIA**

(57 films)

*Americanizing Shelley* (2007): “Hollywood meets Bollywood in director Lorraine Senna's Pygmalion-like tale of a Tinseltown hanger-on who attempts to transform a Himalayan village belle into an A-list American celebrity. Having recently arrived in America to discover the man she was arranged to marry is far from the man of her dreams, Himalayan girl Shalini (Namrata Singh Gujral) sets out to seek her fortune in a foreign land where anything seems possible. Little does Shalini realize that southern-bred west-coast import Rob (Brad Raider) is attempting to make a name for himself in show-business, and has recently been challenged by the CEO of a Hollywood management company (Beau Bridges) pluck a superstar out of thin air. Now, as Shalini becomes Shelley and Rob does his best to school the culturally inquisitive beauty in the ways of Western society, the opportunity to see the world from an entirely different perspective prompts both to reevaluate their lives as love begins to blossom and the quest for fame takes a back seat to romance.”

*Anna and the King* (1999): “The true story of Anna Leonowens’ experiences as a governess to the children of an eccentric Asian king has been adapted into a book of memoirs, a biography, a stage play called *Anna and the King of Siam* — which was adapted into a 1946 film, a stage musical called *The King and I* — made into both the live-action *The King and I* (1956) and the animated *The King and I* (1999) feature films, and a short-lived 1972 TV series. Now the story is brought to the screen yet again, as Jodie Foster stars as Leonowens, hired by the king of Thailand (Chow Yun-Fat) in the 19th century to help care for his children. The king wants the best for his children, but Anna soon discovers that he is a strong-willed but quixotic leader, and her stay in Thailand becomes a struggle for power with romantic overtones, as they decide who will have authority over the royal youngsters. *Anna and the King* was directed by Andy Tennant, best

**Asoka** (2001): "Cinematographer turned director Santosh Sivan follows up on his acclaimed 1999 opus *Malli* with this sweeping historical epic. Asoka, the emperor of the Mauryan dynasty between 274 and 232 B.C., was famed for having unified much of modern-day India and for raising Buddhism from obscurity to the ranks of a world religion. Early in his life, as Emperor of the region of Magadha, he waged a brutal campaign against the neighboring fiefdom of Challenge, leaving the land bloody and ravaged. The war paid a toll on the young king; having realized the full horror that he wrought, Asoka renounced violence and turned to the spiritual sanctuary of Buddhism."

**Bangkok Dangerous** (2000): "Kong, a professional killer, has been mute since childhood. He plies the city's bitterest streets, with silence his only response to the killings and assassinations he performs. He is deadly. He is numb. He enacts his grisly tasks with a sociopathic coldness -his steady, impersonal revenge on the world. Ultimately, the chance for his transformation (and redemption) finally arrives in the form of a girl able to provide the only tenderness and warmth he's ever known. It could save him. It could kill him. A gritty story, the film is a powerful thriller, with strong emphasis on style, suave cutting techniques, effects, and urbane production values. Fast-paced, bloody and exciting, this film shows Bangkok's darker worlds, and the glimmer of hope possible in the dimmest of lives. It's a film about cities, a film about death. With its high-speed chases, its gunfire and action, its intensity, *Bangkok Dangerous* is a killer." **Note:** this is the original Thai version of the film, not the American remake (2008) starring Nicholas Cage.

**Before the Rains** (2007): "An Englishman intent on opening a spice plantation in Kerala attempts to gain the trust of the local villagers and destroys numerous lives in the process in this period drama from director/ cinematographer Santosh Sivan. The year is 1937, and the power that the English wield over the citizens of India can be devastating even in the mildest of cases. Henry Moores (Linus Roache) is an entrepreneur and businessman who has singled out Kerala as the site where he plans to break ground on a potentially lucrative spice plantation. When Henry discovers that he will have to build a new road in order to make his plans feasible, he enlists the aid of trusted right-hand man T.K. (Rahul Bose) is warming the locals to the idea. The project is going to take plenty of manpower, and Henry is going to need all the help he can get. But while Henry relies on T.K. to help him realize his professional goals, his personal needs fall on the shoulders of his pretty housekeeper, Sajani (Nandita Das). One day, when their trip into the forest to collect honey takes a decidedly sensual turn, two local village boys witness the eroticly charged tryst and word eventually gets back to Sanani's husband in the village."

**Bend It Like Beckham** (2002): "An independent-minded young woman discovers the joys of football, much to her family's chagrin, in this upbeat British comedy drama. Jess Bhamra (Parminder Nagra) is an 18-year-old growing up in West London, where her family has taken every effort to stay in touch with its Indian heritage. Jess' father and mother (Anupam Kher and Shaheen Khan) are after their daughter to go to law school, learn to cook a traditional Indian dinner, and settle down with a nice Indian boy — the latter of which is high on the agenda of her older sister Pinky (Archie Panjabi), who is soon to wed her longtime beau Teetu (Kulvinder Ghir). However, her family is unaware that Jess has a secret passion — football (or soccer, as it's known in North America). While Jess' enthusiasm for football star David Beckham is obvious, given the fact his photos cover the walls of her room, her parents don't know that in her spare time she likes to play a friendly game in the park with some of the boys in the neighborhood. One day, while Jess and her pals kick the ball around, she meets Jules (Keira Knightley), who is quite impressed with Jess' skills. Jules plays with a local semi-pro women's football team, the Hounslow Harriers, and she thinks Jess has what it takes to make the team. Jess knows that her parents would never approve of their daughter playing football, so she doesn't tell them, and starts spinning an increasingly complex series of lies as she tries to keep up a double life as a student and a footballer. Jess soon discovers a number of her new friends have their own problems to overcome; Jules dreams of playing pro ball in America, but has to deal with her
stubborn and disapproving mother (Juliet Stevenson), while Joe (Jonathan Rhys Meyers), Hounslow's Irish coach, still struggles with the disappointment of a career as a professional athlete which was dashed by a knee injury. Bend It Like Beckham was a significant box-office success in Great Britain and Europe, but didn't reach American theaters until nearly a year after it debuted in the U.K." This film won 17 awards and had 18 nominations, including a nomination for the Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy (2004).

**Best Exotic Marigold Hotel** (2012): "A small group of British retirees learn that the life they want to live might not be the life they need to live after pooling their resources to spend their twilight years in a unique setting located in India. Upon arriving at the once-opulent Marigold Hotel, however, the eager pensioners come to realize that rumors of the building’s restoration have been greatly exaggerated. But just when it starts to seem that the privileged seniors have been swindled out of their life savings, they summon the courage to sever their ties to the past, and embrace their new life with a sense of wonder and adventure. Tom Wilkinson, Maggie Smith, Judi Dench, Bill Nighy, and Dev Patel star in this uplifting comedy-drama from director John Madden (The Debt, Shakespeare in Love)."

**Black** (2005): "Black revolves around a blind and deaf girl, and her relationship with her teacher who himself later develops Alzheimer's disease. The film is a creative adaptation of the 1962 Hollywood film The Miracle Worker starring Anne Bancroft and Patty Duke directed by Arthur Penn. This critically acclaimed film was adapted with certain modifications; for example, the female protagonist was changed to a male protagonist. Miracle Worker was further adapted from the 1959 play of the same title which in turn was an inspiration from Helen Keller's life and struggle." The film was screened at the Casablanca Film Festival and the International Film Festival of India. It won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Hindi and eleven Filmfare Awards. Time Magazine (Europe) selected the film as one of the 10 Best Movies of the Year 2005 from across the globe. The movie was positioned at number five. Indiatimes Movies ranks the movie amongst the 25 Must See Bollywood Films.

**Bollywood Queen** (2002): "West Side Story goes East in this heart warming homage to Bollywood musicals about two star-crossed lovers crossing cultures, family, and the law. A half-parody and half-loving tribute to the over-the-top style of Indian musicals, this song-and-dance-filled musical comedy-drama concerns Geena (Preeya Kalidas), a pretty and virtuous young women who has been raised by a loving but strictly traditional Indian family. One day, Geena happens to meet a charming and footloose visiting Englishmen named Jay (James MacAvoy), and it's love at first sight for the both of them. However, Geena's family does not approve of her dating a relative stranger, and as her brothers keep an eye on her every move, Geena is forced to meet Jay on the sly. Before long, she impulsively leaves for England with him, with her family giving chase. Along the way, the story stops periodically to give the characters the opportunity to burst into song, though along with the expected Hindi pop tunes, the characters let loose with blues, folk, and roots rock compositions." Bollywood Queen was screened in competition at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival.

**Bombay** (1995): "This powerfully provocative political-religious melodrama was a blockbuster hit in India where it was made. The message in the film was considered so potent by the government that it took two months for censors, police, and politicians to review it prior to the film’s release. It is, on the surface, a love story between a good Hindu man and a devout Muslim woman who leave their village to marry and live in tumultuous Bombay. There they have twin sons and raise each one to understand and accept the disparate religious traditions of their parents. Within the great city, there is much religious unrest and when the Muslims hear that Hindu radicals have attacked an ancient Mosque, riots explode everywhere. At one point rioters capture the twins and demand they claim their religion; when they cannot, they are doused with gasoline and are almost immolated. Meanwhile, their father, a journalist, attempts to report on the fighting and finds himself faced with blind hatred on either side. To protect their grandchildren, their two grandfathers, traditionally bitter enemies, move to Bombay, and when they too suffer religious persecution, they unite to end the violence."
**Born Into Brothels** (2004): “*Born Into Brothels* is a documentary about the inspiring non-profit foundation Kids With Cameras, which teaches photography skills to children in marginalized communities. In 1998, New York-based photographer Zana Briski started photographing prostitutes in the red-light district of Calcutta. She eventually developed a relationship with their children, who were fascinated by her equipment. After several years of learning in workshops with Briski, the kids created their own photographs with point-and-shoot 35mm cameras. Their images capture the intimacy and color of everyday life in the overpopulated sections of Calcutta. Proceeds from the sale of the children's photographs go to fund their future education. Directed by Briski and filmmaker Ross Kauffman, *Born Into Brothels* was shown at the Sundance Film Festival in 2004 as part of the documentary competition.” Winner of Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature (2005).

**Brick Lane** (2007): “Director Sarah Gavron and screenwriter Abi Morgan team to adapt author Monica Ali's award-winning novel about a young girl from Bangladesh who finds the spark in her soul slowly fading after traveling to London for an arranged marriage. As a child, Nazneen (Tannishtha Chatterjee) was always told that she was a survivor. Now, as a young adult, she is leaving behind her mother and sister to start a new life in London's East End. Married to a man she has never met and relocated from her quaint village to a working-class Brick Lane neighborhood, the newlywed Nazneen does her best to be a devoted wife and loving mother. It's a lonely life, and as Nazneen's pompous, ineffectual husband, Chanu (Satish Kaushik), does his best to fit into British society, the bored housewife finds herself increasingly drawn to hotheaded neighbor Karim (Christopher Simpson). It isn't long before the relationship between Nazneen and Karim turns romantic, and in the wake of 9/11, the pair realize that they are intimately bound together by their political beliefs as well. Karim is fast becoming a radical and so, perhaps, is Nazneen. Meanwhile, back in Bangladesh, Nazneen's beloved sister Hasina (Zafreen) embarks on a series of life-altering adventures.”

**Bride and Prejudice** (2004): “The very British sensibilities of Jane Austen are introduced to the exotic flavors of the Bollywood musical in this romantic comedy with songs from the director of *Bend It Like Beckham*, Gurinder Chadha. Lalita Bakshi (Aishwarya Rai) is the lovely and eligible daughter of her socially ambitious mother and father (Nadira Babbar and Anupam Kher). Mother and father want to be sure that Lalita, the most beautiful of their four daughters, settles down with a man worthy of her, but she has proven resistant to matchmaking, announcing that she will choose her own husband, and will choose him for love. While mother is keen on the profoundly annoying Kholi (Nitin Chandra Ganatra), Lalita has had her head turned by a handsome vagabond from England, Johnny Wickham (Daniel Gilles). But while attending the wedding of a friend, Lalita meets Will Darcy (Martin Henderson), a college buddy of family friend Raj (Naveen Andrews) who is the son of a wealthy hotel magnate. Lalita finds that Will makes a strong impression on her — she can't stand him, but she also can't get him out of her mind. Will feels the same way about her, and as they inadvertently chase one another over three continents, will morbid fascination grow into true love? *Bride and Prejudice* marked the first English-speaking role for Aishwarya Rai, who had firmly established herself as India's leading female star when this film was made.”

**Burma VJ: Reporting from a Closed Country** (2008): “The Southeast Asian nation of Burma (also known as Myanmar) has been under the control of a military dictatorship since a coup toppled the elected prime minister in 1962. With Burma's press and mass media under the control of the military government, dissent has had little opportunity to take hold in the country, but that began to change in 2007; a band of Buddhist monks stepped forward to lead a revolt against the state, and as news spread about their actions, as many as 100,000 people took part in protests against the oppressive and violent leadership. The official state media ignored the uprising, but a new breed of reporters were at hand to cover the revolution -- the Democratic Voice of Burma, also known as the Burma VJs, a handful of young video journalists armed with hand-held digital video cameras. The Burma VJs filmed the protests as well as violent acts committed by police and military officials, and then smuggled the footage to colleagues in Thailand, who then passed their images on to news organizations the world over. Filmmaker
Anders Østergaard offers a look at how new technology is pressed into the service of a people's revolution in *Burma VJ*, a documentary which tells the story of the democratic voice of Burma and their role in the battle for a free and democratic Burma. *Burma VJ* received its American premiere at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival. Nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary, Feature (2010).

**City of Joy** (1992): “A wealthy American doctor learns some important lessons about life in one of the poorest cities on Earth. Max Lowe (Patrick Swayze) is a Houston surgeon who has grown weary of the bureaucracy of American medicine. When he loses a patient on the operating table, Max impulsively decides to leave America and travel to India in the hope of "finding himself." Not long after he arrives in Calcutta, Max is attacked by a group of thugs and left without money or a passport. However, a man named Hasari (Om Puri) comes to Max's rescue. Hasari had left his farming community to come to the city, only to be overwhelmed by its dirt, crime, and overcrowding. Despite their poverty, Hasari and his family take Max in and bring him to a medical clinic in the City of Joy, one of the poorest slums in the city. The clinic is run by Joan Bethel (Pauline Collins), an Irish-American nun who urges Max to use his skills to help the people of Calcutta who so desperately need it. Max signs on, and he finds that the experience changes his life. *City of Joy* was based on a novel by Dominique Lapierre.”

**Darjeeling Limited** (2007): “Three American brothers who have not spoken to each other in a year set off on a train voyage across India with a plan to find themselves and bond with each other -- to become brothers again like they used to be. Their 'spiritual quest', however, veers rapidly off-course (due to events involving over-the-counter pain killers, Indian cough syrup, and pepper spray), and they eventually find themselves stranded alone in the middle of the desert with eleven suitcases, a printer, and a laminating machine. At this moment, a new, unplanned journey suddenly begins.”

**Delhi 6** (2009): “Delhi-6 attempts to exposes the dual face of a person. It is a story of a young American Roshan, whose father is Hindu and his mother is Muslim. He comes to India for the first time as he accompanies his ailing grandmother who wants to die in her own soil. Having lead a very western lifestyle in America, Roshan wasn't aware of the sites and smells, the food and culture, the religion and beliefs, that an Indian society is filled with. After coming to India he interacts with his grandmother's neighborhood and seamlessly dissolves in as if one of them. But while living with these endearing people he also exposed to some sobering realities.”

**Dhobi Ghat** (2010): “Four lives intersect in contemporary Mumbai in this six-degrees drama from director Kiran Rao. As reserved Yasmin (Kriti Malhotra) drifts through the streets of the city in a taxi cab, her ever-present video camera aimed out the window, a conversation with her driver leads to the discovery that they were both raised in neighboring communities. Later, at a local art gallery, visiting investment banker Shai (Monica Dogra) hits it off with talented artist Arun (Aamir Khan), leading to a night neither is likely to forget -- even if they never see each other again. Although the attraction between amateur photographer Shai and handsome dhobi Munna (Prateik Babbar) is more platonic in nature, his offer to show her the city in exchange for shooting some pictures for his portfolio proves irresistible, and together the pair form a powerful yet unlikely bond. Meanwhile, despite Arun's best efforts to seal himself off from the world in his new apartment, an unexpected discovery serves as a reminder that all hope for love is not yet lost.”

**Dreaming Lhasa** (2005): “A Tibetan-American filmmaker seeking to capture the tales of former political prisoners on film is drawn into the plight of Tibet's exile community in this drama from filmmakers Ritu Sarin and Tenzing Sonam. Though she currently hails from New Your City, Karma (Tenzin Choky Gyatso) is one-hundred-percent Tibetan by blood. Upon arriving at the Indian border town of Dharamsala that is currently occupied by a number of Tibetan exiles, Karma makes the acquaintance of ex-monk Dhondup (Jampa Kalsang), who has fled from Tibet after fighting against the government. Soon embarking on a journey with Dhondup to seek out the missing Loga (Phuntsok Namgyal Dhumkhang) and deliver to him a treasured charm box, Karma
finds herself immersed in Tibetan Buddhist culture and forming a close bond with a handsome young Tibetan adventurer named Jigme (Tenzin Jigme).

**Earth** (1998): “Deepa Mehta directed this Indian-Canadian romantic drama, the second part of a trilogy (*Fire* (1996), *Earth* (1998), and *Water* (2005)). Based on Bapsi Sidhwa's autobiography, *Cracking India*, the story is set in 1947 in Lahore, where Hindu, Sikh, Parsee, and Muslim share a peaceful co-existence. Events are seen from the point of view of eight-year-old Lenny (Maia Sethna), a girl from an affluent Parsee family. Lenny's nanny, Shantya (Nandita Das), is involved with the Muslim Masseur (Rahul Khanna). When a train of Muslims arrives at the local depot and all the passengers are found murdered, the various sects turn against each other, and the city is soon aflame.” Shown at the 1998 Toronto Film Festival.

**Eat, Pray, Love** (2010): “A woman who once made it her goal in life to marry and rear a family finds her priorities suddenly shifting in Ryan Murphy and Jennifer Salt's adaptation of author Elizabeth Gilbert's best-selling memoir. In the eyes of many, Liz Gilbert (Julia Roberts) was a woman who had it all -- a loving husband, a great career, and a weekend home -- but sometimes one realizes too little too late that they haven't gotten what they truly wanted from life. On the heels of a painful divorce, the woman who had previously looked forward to a contented life of domestic bliss sets out to seek her true destiny by traveling first to Italy, where she learns to appreciate nourishment; then to India, where she discovers the power of prayer; and finally to Bali, where she unexpectedly finds the meaning of true love.”

**Finding Preet** (2005): “A thirty-something American-Indian woman finds her quest for love becoming increasingly frantic with each passing year in this semi-autobiographical romantic comedy based on the writings of writer/actress Priti Malani. Despite attempts at finding love through a dating service and a little help from her traditional family, Priti just doesn't seem to be able to find preet (Hindi for "love"). Despite her best efforts one never knows what cupid has in store, and Priti soon discovers preet in the most unlikely of places.”

**Fire** (1996): “In this India-set Canadian drama, the first part of a trilogy (*Fire* (1996), *Earth* (1998), and *Water* (2005)), two disparate wives related by marriage and united at first by the oppressiveness of Indian tradition that relegates them to miserable unions, find solace and love in each other's arms. The film opens as an unhappy young couple, Jatin and Sita, fumble through a conversation. Neither wanted to marry each other, but as it was arranged by Jatin's family, they had no choice. Marriage does not stop Jatin, who owns a video store, from continuing his long-time love affair with a Chinese hairdresser. Caring nothing for Sita, he doesn't even try to hide the affair. Jatin's brother Ashok (who forced Jatin's marriage) is married to Radha. Deeply frustrated at her inability to conceive, he has joined a radical cult that forbids all sexual contact. Ashok and Jatin's demanding mother doesn't help matters nor does the family's twisted servant Mundu.”

**Gandhi** (1982): “It was Richard Attenborough's lifelong dream to bring the life story of Indian political and spiritual leader Mahatma Gandhi to the screen. When it finally reached fruition in 1982, the 188-minute, Oscar-winning *Gandhi* was one of the most exhaustively thorough biopics ever made. The film begins in the early part of the 20th century, when Mohandas K. Gandhi (Ben Kingsley), a British-trained lawyer, forsakes all worldly possessions to take up the cause of Indian independence. Faced with armed resistance from the British government, Gandhi adopts a policy of "passive resistance," endeavoring to win freedom for his people without resorting to bloodshed. In the horrendous 'slaughter' sequence, more extras appear on screen than in any previous historical epic. The supporting cast includes Candice Bergen as photographer Margaret Bourke-White, Athol Fugard as General Smuts, John Gielgud as Lord Irwin, John Mills as the viceroy, Martin Sheen as Walker, Trevor Howard as Judge Broomfield, and, in a tiny part as a street bully, star-to-be Daniel Day-Lewis.” Nominated for eleven Academy awards and winner of eight including Best Picture, Best Actor, and Best Director (1983); winner of five Golden Globes (1983).
Heaven and Earth (1993): "With Heaven and Earth — cobbled together from two autobiographical reminiscences (When Heaven and Earth Changed Places and Child of War, Woman of Peace by Le Ly Hayslip) — Oliver Stone completes his self-declared "Vietnam Trilogy" (the other films being Platoon and Born On the Fourth of July) of films examining the Vietnam War from different perspectives. Heaven and Earth begins in the central Vietnamese village of Ky La during the 1950s. Phung Le Ly (Hiep Thi Le) is an innocent peasant girl, helping her mother (Joan Chen) to tend the rice paddies while being lectured in the ways of life by her father (Haing Ngor). The idyllic peace of the village is disrupted when a jet bomber crosses the skies. Soon the village is decimated as the American-backed South Vietnamese government troops and the Viet Cong engage in brutal warfare in which the victims are the innocent villagers. Le Ly is both tortured and raped. She leaves Ky La for Danang for a life as a prostitute. There she meets the tall and craggy American soldier Steve Butler (Tommy Lee Jones), a kind but lonely man who isn't looking for sex but for someone to settle down with — as he says, 'I want an Oriental wife.' They marry, and Steve takes her back to the United States, where her in-laws look at her not as a wife but as a pet. In the harsh glare of 1970s U.S. culture, Le Ly has trouble adjusting to the American way of life. But not as hard a time as her husband, who, after twenty years in Vietnam, discovers he cannot adapt to civilian life." Winner of Golden Globe for Best Original Score (1994) and nominated for an Award of the Japanese Academy for Best Foreign Film (1994).

Himalaya, l'Enfance d'un Chef (1999): "A fictional film about the forgotten people of Tibet, focusing on their daily lives and traditional customs. In a remote village in the Dolpo in the northwestern Himalayas of Nepal, Tinle, a charismatic old chief, has just lost his eldest son. He refuses to allow his son's friend Karma, whom he holds responsible for his son's death, to lead a caravan of yaks. Karma defies the old man's anger and the shaman's advice and moves the caravan, with the help of other village youtha, before the date set by the ritual. On the day indicated by the gods, Tinle gets together the village elderly and sets out on the same journey with his second son and his grandson, who is destined to be the next chief. The ancestral struggle between the old man and the mountains begins all over again. Eric Valli traveled in the region for many years and studied the ways of the people before making this film, which is based on the epic lives of two of his Tibetan friends. The film was shot over a nine-month period with a small French crew working under extreme conditions at an altitude reaching 17,000 feet. Scenic shots are spectacular, particularly those depicting the crossing of the high pass." Academy Award Nominee for Best Foreign Language Film (2000).

Holly (2006): "Ron Livingston delivers a powerful breakout performance as a 'comfortably numb' American gambler named Patrick who is immersed in a dangerous and shocking culture of corruption, slaver and deceit. Disgusted and inspired, he finds true meaning in his life as he frantically searches through both the beautiful and sordid faces of Cambodia, risking everything in a desperate attempt to save the life of one girl - the title character who is a twelve-year old Vietnamese prostitute. Starring Chris Penn in his final role with a chilling performance by Udo Kier."

Jodhaa Akbar (2007) "A sixteenth century love story about a marriage of alliance that gave birth to true love between the greatest Mughal Emperor Akbar and a fiery young Rajput princess Jodhaa, daughter of King Bharmal of Amer. When Akbar accepts the marriage proposal, little does he know that in his efforts to strengthen his relations with the Rajputs, he would in turn be embarking on a new journey - the journey of true love. Besides focusing on the romance, the film also develops Akbar’s character and details his formative years from his tutelage under Bairam Khan and the battlefield where the young Jalaluddin was crowned, through the conquests that won him the title of Akbar the Great ('Akbar' in Arabic means great), to winning the love of the beautiful Jodhaa."

Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham (2001): "When forbidden love tears a tightly knit Indian family apart, a mother's heartbreak prompts her son to reunite the shattered clan in this family drama from filmmaker Karan Johar. Business tycoon Yashovardhan Raichand (Amitabh Bachchan) has everything a man could ever want: a loving family, a thriving empire, and a beautiful wife. When
Yashovardhan's son Rahul (Shah Rukh Khan) discovers that he is adopted, he expresses his gratitude through unwavering devotion and unending loyalty until the day that he falls in love with a boisterous young outcast named Anjali (Kajol). Disowned by his father and left to his own devices, Rahul gathers Anjali and her young sister, Pooja (Kareena Kapoor), and sets his sights on London. As the grief of Rahul's mother becomes too much to bear, Rahul's brother Rohan sets out to find his brother and reunite their fragmented family.

The Killing Fields (1984): “A romanticized adaptation of an eyewitness magazine story by New York Times correspondent Sidney Schanberg. Covering the U.S. pullout from Vietnam in 1975, Schanberg (Sam Waterston) relies on his Cambodian friend and translator Dith Pran (Haing S. Ngor) for inside information. Schanberg has an opportunity to rescue Dith Pran when the U.S. army evacuates all Cambodian citizens; instead, the reporter coerces his friend to remain behind to continue sending him news flashes. Although his family is helicoptered out of Saigon (a recreation of the famous TV news clip), Dith Pran stays with Schanberg on the ground. Racked with guilt, Schanberg does his best to arrange for Dith Pran's escape, but the Cambodian is captured by the dreaded Khmer Rouge. Accepting his Pulitzer Prize on behalf of Dith Pran, Schanberg vows to do right by his friend and extricate him from Cambodia. The rest of the film details Dith Pran's harrowing experiences at the hands of the Khmer Rouge, and his attempt to escape on his own.” This film was nominated for seven Academy Awards and winner of three, including Best Supporting Actor (Hang S. Ngor, a Cambodian doctor who lived through many of the horrific events depicted herein), Best Cinematography, and Best Editing.

The King Maker (2005): “A visually sumptuous period piece from Thailand, The King Maker is also, for better or worse, an old-fashioned adventure movie, complete with exotic locations, royal intrigue, and plenty of swashbuckling and derring-do. When Fernando De Gama (Gary Stretch) was just a young boy, his father was slain by a stealthy assassin. Now Fernando has grown into a feared mercenary, and he has set his sights on the Orient in an effort to seek out his father's killer. After the ship he is sailing on capsizes and Fernando washes ashore on a tropical island, he is captured by Arabs, transported to the Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya, and sold into slavery. Despite the grim turn in his quest, fate seems to smile upon Fernando when the ravishing Maria purchases him from the Arabs and subsequently restores his freedom. Soon after falling in love with his kindly rescuer, Fernando discovers that her disapproving father is actually the man he has been searching for all along. When a Northern renegade pretender summons the wrath of the King of Siam and the nation is plunged into war, Fernando is reluctantly pressed into military service. If there's one thing Fernando knows it's warfare, and after gaining favor with the king for his impressive display on the battlefield Fernando is eventually recruited into the royal guard. Trouble is brewing in the royal palace, however, and when Fernando discovers a plot by the queen to murder her husband and win her lover a seat on the royal throne he vows to stop the diabolical plot before an entire nation is plunged into chaos.”

Kundun (1997): “This Martin Scorsese film drama detailing the Dalai Lama's life story was in development for seven years, with the Dalai Lama having input into the 14 screenplay drafts by Melissa Mathison (The Black Stallion, E.T.). With four actors portraying the Dalai Lama at different ages, Scorsese's chronicle begins in 1933 with the death of the 13th Dalai Lama. Born in a remote area, the new Dalai Lama (seen at ages two and five in early sequences) is observed by monks who determine that he is the 14th reincarnation of the Buddha of Compassion. In 1944 the Dalai Lama uses newsreels and Western magazines to study WWII events, and as the war ends, he is forced to deal with Chinese Communist aggression. Protests from the Dalai Lama in 1949 are ignored as Mao (Robert Lin) maintains a military stranglehold on Tibet, eventually forcing the Dalai Lama to flee to Dharmasala, India. With a $28 million budget, Scorsese re-created Tibet's tragedy by filming in south-central Morocco with a cast of nonprofessional Tibetan actors. Second unit work took place at locations in Idaho and British Columbia. Avant-garde composer Philip Glass contributed a score with hypnotic, ritualistic overtones.” Nominated for four Academy Awards (1998).
**The Lady** (2011): “Director Luc Besson (*La Femme Nikita, The Professional*) teams with screenwriter Rebecca Frayn to tell the true-life story of Burmese pro-democracy activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi (Michelle Yeoh), whose marriage to husband Michael Aris (David Thewlis) endured even after Kyi was placed under house arrest by her government for nearly 15 years.”

**Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India** (2001): “One of the most expensive films ever to come out of Bollywood, Lagaan tells the tale of the Indian village Champaner, beset by drought and British colonialism in the year 1893. Without a drop of rain in months, the worried villagers of Champaner decide to ask the local authorities for a temporary repeal of their taxes -- the hated lagaan. Led by the heroic Bhuvan (Indian superstar Aamir Khan) they bring their plight to the military governor, Captain Russell (Paul Blackthorne). But the sadistic Russell threatens to raise the lagaan threefold, unless the villagers can beat his men at a game of cricket, in which case he'll lift taxes on the entire province for a period of three years. Bhuvan accepts the challenge, but there's a problem -- no one in Champaner knows how to play cricket. A band of misfits come to the rescue, coached by Russell's soft-hearted sister Elizabeth (Rachel Shelley), and the race is on to be ready in three months' time. An epic reworking of *V*ictory with eye-popping song-and-dance routines, *Lagaan* was a major cinematic event in India upon its release.” Nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film (2002).

**Last Life in the Universe** (2003): “A story of two very different people coming together in the wake of personal tragedies, *Last Life in the Universe* stars Tadanobu Asano as Kenji, a quiet, bespectacled Japanese librarian living in Bangkok. Obsessed with suicide, he meticulously stages ways to kill himself, only to be interrupted every time. One night, his more raucous brother shows up for an unexpected visit, accompanied by a yakuza gangster. A gunfight breaks out, leaving both visitors dead. Kenji ventures out into the night and happens upon Noi (Sinitta Boonyasak), a feisty bargirl whose sister has just died in an accident following a fight over their shared boyfriend. Kenji accompanies Noi to her sprawling, dilapidated house in the country, where a relationship develops despite their language barrier and clashing personalities, until another twist of fate threatens to tear them apart.”

**Marigold** (2007): “A demanding American actress heads to India in order to shoot a low-budget Hollywood film, only to find herself stranded in Bombay with no luggage and attitude to spare. Despite the unfortunate start to her Bombay adventure, the once-jaded actress is soon swept up in the glitz and glamour of the local filmmaking scene and cast in a lavish Bollywood musical. Once on the set, she meets a handsome prince and falls hopelessly in love.”

**Monsoon Wedding** (2001): “Following up on her controversial erotic drama *Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love*, Mira Nair directs this charming family drama about a very chaotic Indian wedding. Lalit Verma (Naseeruddin Shah) is a wealthy father who is trying to see that his daughter Aditi's wedding goes off without a hitch. Though familiar with Western ways, he has little patience with them and is dead set on seeing the nuptials done properly and traditionally. Disillusioned with her long time relationship with Vikram — a man who is almost twice her age — Aditi (Vasundhara Das) suddenly agrees to submit to an arranged marriage with Hemant, an engineer from Houston. Yet as the ceremony nears, she gets cold feet and returns to see her former lover — even though it could spell disaster for everyone involved. Meanwhile, Aditi's comely 17-year-old cousin Ayesha is coming to terms with her blossoming sexuality and has her sights set on Rahul, another relative who is a college student in Australia. Then there is Rai — also Aditi's cousin — who has a shocking revelation to make. This film was screened at the 2001 Toronto and Venice Film Festivals. At Venice, *Monsoon Wedding* won the prestigious Golden Lion award.” Nominated for Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film (2002).

**Mughal-E-Azam** (1960): “The Magnum Opus of Indian Cinema”. “Badshah Akbar was the supreme ruler of Hindustan and ruled this country fairly and justly. He wanted the Hindus and Muslims to live as a big family; encourages all religious groups to live in harmony together; and even undertakes a barefoot journey to the temple of Ambe Maa and installs a gold umbrella over Ambe Maa. He married a Hindu Rajput Yodhabai, and together they sire a son who they
name Saleem. Born in a very tolerant and acceptable atmosphere, Saleem also witnesses war and perhaps this does have an effect on his mind. He then falls in love with a lowly courtesan, Anarkali. When his parents want him to get married to a woman of their choice, he refuses and wants to marry Anarkali. This angers the tolerant Akbar, who could never visualize his son marrying a mere dancing girl. He has Anarkali imprisoned, but Saleem arranges her escape and incites an open revolt against Akbar. Enraged, Akbar declares Saleem a traitor and sends his armies to crush him. Saleem is defeated and brought in chains to be sentenced by his father, but Anarkali managed to elude his armies. Akbar wants to trade Saleem's life with that of Anarkali, but Saleem will not let anyone know where Anarkali is, and is therefore sentenced to die. Watch the climax, to the tunes of "Zindabad...Zindabad...." of this blockbuster as Saleem is tied to a tower and a huge cannon is aimed at him to blow him to bits in front of everyone present.

**My Name is Khan** (2010): "Two of Bollywood's biggest superstars, Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol, deliver powerful performances in this epic romance that proves true love knows no boundaries. Rizwan (Khan), an Indian man with a unique way of looking at the world, moves to San Francisco and meets a vivacious single mother named Mandira (Kajol). They form a special bond and fall in love against all odds, but fate and tragedy conspire to tear them apart. That's when Rizwan embarks on a remarkable journey across America to win back the love of his life."

**The Mystic Masseur** (2001): Ismail Merchant, best known as the producing half of the successful Merchant-Ivory team, once again steps behind the camera as director for this story of life among Indian expatriates in the 1950s. Ganesh (Aasif Mandvi) is a young man who was born to a community of Indian exiles living in Trinidad. Always bright, Ganesh hopes to hake a career for himself as a writer, but he lacks the money to pursue writing full-time, and his ideas about education clash with those of his employers after he gets a job as a teacher, leaving him with few prospects. Returning to Trinidad after the death of his father, Ganesh is pressured into marrying a local woman named Leela (Ayesha Dharker), whose father, Ramlogan (Om Puri), is a successful merchant. Ganesh and Leela move to a modest home in the hills, where he begins work on a book, but Leela chafes at the Spartan lifestyle dictated by Ganesh's finances, and for a time leaves their home to stay with her parents. In time, Ganesh completes his first book — a book for lay people on the Hindu faith — but sales are sluggish until Ganesh and Leela come up with a plan to boost interest in Ganesh's work. Ganesh is promoted as a 'Mystic Masseur' with special powers to heal the infirm; Ganesh's routine quickly makes his work very popular with spiritual seekers, and his book becomes a top-seller. However, Ganesh becomes disillusioned with his newfound fame and power, especially after he attempts to take advantage of his celebrity by entering the political arena. The Mystic Masseur was based on a novel by V.S. Naipaul, who won a Nobel prize in the year of this film's release."

**The Namesake** (2006): "A couple coming to terms with living in a new culture discover their troubles are compounded by their son in this drama from filmmaker Mira Nair. Ashoke (Irfan Khan) and Ashima (Tabu) are a young couple who are brought together in an arranged marriage and soon leave Calcutta to seek their fortune in America. As the couple becomes accustomed to one another, they learn to deal with the coolness and superficiality of life in New York, even as they revel in the opportunities the city offers them. Before long, Ashima gives birth to a baby boy, and pressed to choose a name, they dub the infant Nikhil, though he soon picks up the nickname Gogol, after Ashoke's favorite author. By the time the child is old enough to attend school, he insists upon being called Gogol at all times, and he displays little interest in his Indian heritage. Several years on, Gogol has decided he wants to be called Nick (and is now played by Kal Penn) and has become a thoroughly Americanized teenager, openly rebelling against his parents, smoking marijuana in his room, and dating Maxine (Jacinda Barrett), a preppy blonde from a wealthy family. Ashoke and Ashima are uncertain about how to deal with their son's attempts to cut himself off from their culture, but Nick begins expressing some uncertainty himself when he meets Moushumi (Zuleikha Robinson), a beautiful girl who also comes from a family of Indian expatriates. The Namesake was adapted from the bestselling novel by Jhumpa Lahiri."
**Om Shanti Om** (2007): “Love and dreams follow two starry-eyed actors across three decades and two incarnations in this splashy Hindi musical. It's the early Seventies, and Om Prakash Makhija (Shah Rukh Khan) is a young would-be actor who has been playing bit parts in Bollywood musicals while looking for his big break. Om's ambition is to become a film star and win the heart of beautiful screen siren Shantipriya (Deepika Padukone), and his pal Pappu (Shreyas Talpade) and his mother Bela (Kirron Kher) both encourage him not to give up on his dreams. One day, Om meets Shantipriya on a movie set, and he feels as if destiny is finally smiling on him, but when he overhears her having an argument with studio chief Mukesh Mehra (Arjun Rampal), Om senses things are not as they should be. Before Om can decide what to make of his misgivings, the studio burns to the ground, claiming the lives of Om and Shantipriya. Thirty years later, a bit of Om's spirit seems to live on in Om Kapoor (also played by Shah Rukh Khan) a popular film actor with a large ego and a fear of flame who was born the day the old studio burned down. Despite his fame, Om is lonely, at least until he meets Sandhya (also played by Deepika Padukone), a shy but eager would-be actress looking for her chance to become a star. *Om Shanti Om* was directed and co-written by Farah Khan, who was a top choreographer in the Indian film industry before moving up to the director's chair, and features guest spots from a number of Bollywood's greatest stars, a few appearing in the form of digital recreations taken from films of the Seventies.”

**Outsourced** (2007): “This low-key, charming movie is a thoughtful satire about the human side of contemporary frustrations associated with the global economy. When the 32-year-old Todd Anderson (Josh Hamilton), the manager of a Seattle customer call center, receives word that his entire Order Fulfillment department is about to be outsourced to India, his initial anger gives way to a newfound sense of wonder as he travels to Mumbai to train his replacement and ensure the company's transition is a smooth one. Todd's frustration is compounded by his culture shock over everything from Indian table manners to public transportation to minimal bathroom fixtures. He is subsequently disarmed by the friendliness of his likeable replacement, Puro (Asif Basra), and charmed by co-worker Asha's (Ayesha Dharker) offer to better familiarize the newcomer with the people and customs of India. As Todd begins to sow the seeds of productivity among his amiable new employees and gains the ability to look past their cultural differences, an overnight business trip that lands Todd and Asha together at a hotel threatens to complicate the endeavor in ways that the outsourced American never anticipated.”

**Partition** (2007) “In a time when India and Pakistan are being torn apart, true love still manages to take root despite the fear and intolerance that blights the troubled landscape. The year is 1947, and as India and Pakistan are split into two separate states the rivers run red with blood. Gian (Jimi Mistry) is a Sikh and former soldier who risks his life to rescue young Muslim Naseem (Kristin Kruek) from a rampaging mob. As this unlikely pair begins to realize their true feelings for one another, the bond between them helps to heal the tender wounds of war. But what chance does true love really have against the destructive force or religious zealotry?”

**A Passage to India** (1984): “*A Passage to India*, director David Lean's final film (for which he also received editing credit), breaks no new ground cinematically, but remains an exquisitely assembled harkback to such earlier Lean epics as *Doctor Zhivago* and *Ryan's Daughter*. Based on the novel by E. M. Forster, the film is set in colonial India in 1924. Adela Quested (Judy Davis), a sheltered, well-educated British woman, arrives in the town of Chandrapore, where she hopes to experience "the real India". Here she meets and befriends Dr. Aziz (Victor Banerjee), who, despite longstanding racial and social taboos, moves with relative ease and freedom amongst highborn British circles. Feeling comfortable with Adela, Aziz invites her to accompany him on a visit to the Marabar caves. Adela has previously exhibited bizarre, almost mystical behavior during other ventures into the Indian wilderness: this time, she emerges from the caves showing signs of injury and ill usage. To Aziz' horror, he is accused by Adela of raping her. Typically, the British ruling class rallies to Adela's defense, virtually convicting Aziz before the trial ever begins. Though he is eventually acquitted due to lack of evidence (in fact, director Lean never shows us what really happened), Aziz is ruined in the eyes of both the British and his own people—as is Adela. Woven into these proceedings is a subplot involving Adela's elderly traveling companion Mrs. Moore (Peggy Ashcroft), who through a series of plot twists too complex to
describe here becomes a heroine of the Indian Independence movement. *A Passage to India* was nominated for eleven Academy Awards, scoring wins in the categories of Best Supporting Actress (Peggy Ashcroft) and Best Original Score (Maurice Jarre) (1986). It was also nominated five Golden Globe Awards and won for Best Foreign Film for a Best Foreign Film, Best Original Score, and Best Supporting Actress (1985), nominated for Best Foreign Film at the Japanese Academy Awards (1986), and nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Original Score.

*Provoked* (2007): “Inspired by the true story of Kiranjit Ahluwalia, Jag Mundhra's *Provoked* tells the tale of a battered wife pushed to the ultimate act of defiance. As a nineteen year old girl living in a small Punjab village with her overbearing sisters and their husbands, Kiranjit Ahluwalia (Aishwarya Rai) aspired to get a college education and see the world. Despite her ambitious plans, however, Kiranjit put her entire future on hold the moment she met handsome family friend Deepak (Naveen Andrews). Later, after a whirlwind romance, Kiranjit and Deepak married and prepared to move into Deepak's home in a quaint suburb of London. Kiranjit's storybook romance would quickly give way to a terrifying reality however when, over the course of the following decade, the loving bride suffered a relentless torrent of emotional and physical abuse of her tyrannical husband. Eventually pushed to her breaking point and desperately fearing for the safety of her children, Kiranjit killed Deepak and was subsequently sentenced to life in prison. Though Kiranjit was at first reluctant to share the details of her harrowing experience, she eventually became convinced that the only way to break the cycle of violence was to share her story with the world. Miranda Richardson, Rebecca Pidgeon, and Robbie Coltrane co-star in a docudrama that encourages viewers to take a closer look at the proliferation of domestic violence.”

*Rang de Basanti* (2006): “A young idealistic English filmmaker, Sue, arrives in India to make a film on Indian revolutionaries Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad and their contemporaries and their fight for freedom from the British Raj. Owing to a lack of funds, she recruits students from Delhi University to act in her docu-drama. These youngsters could be anyone of us today and their lives mirror the kind of lives the youth of today lead - namely a self centered and materialistic existence where ideas like patriotism and making a change are strictly the stuff history books are made of. Through her film, Sue wishes to showcase to the world the efforts of these young revolutionaries and the enormity of their contribution to the freedom movement in India. What unfolds is the inspiration behind Sue's passion for bringing their story to the world. The twist in the tale is of course the fact that more than just telling the world, Sue's film makes these young people stop and look at themselves as being the actual descendents of these great men but having never recognizing and celebrating their courage and spirit. The film thus doubles as a narrative on the changes in perspective and values the young boys and girls acting in her documentary go through as they shoot for the film. A few scenes from the past and present are juxtaposed against each other, which renders a slick treatment and serves to showcase the slow change in mindset and attitude that overcomes the group through the process of the film. *Rang de Basanti* is a youthful drama, yet light hearted in the moments that the group shares amongst themselves... before some incidents effect a serious change...which ends in the climax.”

*Saawariya* (2007): “The title of Saawariya carries a double meaning; it refers to both an epithet for the Hindu god Krishna and to a title sought by many Indian lovers, who wish to reach a state of ‘Saawariya,’ or overpowering consumption by love. Director Sanjay Leela Bhansali's romantic drama Saawariya weaves the tale of the ill-fated romance between two such individuals: artist Raj, who finds the fulfillment of his soul's yearning when he enters one of the most picturesque rural hamlets in India, and his lover, Sakina, a mysterious young woman whom he spots standing on a bridge. Raj tries desperately to win Sakina's love and devotion, but finds it increasingly difficult to accept the truth of her past. Based on Fyodor Dostoevsky's, short story known as 'White Nights'. It was the first Indian movie to be co-produced and distributed by a Hollywood production house.”

*Salaam Bombay* (1988): “Shot on-location on the streets of Bombay, Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay* is the gritty tale of Krishna (Shafiq Syed, a runaway discovered by Nair), a boy kicked out of his home, and abandoned by the traveling circus he had joined. In desperation, he uses the little money he has to buy a one-way ticket to the nearest city, which turns out to be Bombay."
'Come back a movie star,' the ticket agent tells him mockingly. In Bombay, Krishna joins a small community of street kids, and gets a job delivering tea. Soon, everyone in the downtrodden neighborhood knows him as 'Chaipau' (tea boy). Krishna wants to save five hundred rupees, enough money to get back into his mother's good graces and return home. Chillum (Raghubir Yadav), a streetwise young man who deals drugs for the local kingpin, Baba (Nana Patekar), takes Krishna under his wing. The sly but cruel Baba has a mistress, Rekha (Aneeta Kanwar), who works as a prostitute. She has a young daughter, Manju (Hansa Vithal), who has a crush on Krishna, but Krishna only has eyes for the girl they call 'Sweet Sixteen,' a virginal teenager who is being forced into prostitution. Eventually, Baba fires the surly Chillum, and Krishna finds himself struggling to keep Chillum alive by supporting his drug habit. Many of the roles in the film are played by non-actors, including the street kids, and an actual madame who allowed Nair to film scenes in her brothel. The Harvard-educated Nair began her filmmaking career working on documentaries. *Salaam Bombay*, her narrative feature debut, won worldwide critical acclaim, and was awarded the Camera D'Or and the Audience Award at Cannes. Nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the Oscars and the Golden Globes (1989). 

**Seven Years in Tibet** (1997): "Typically impressive natural vistas from director Jean-Jacques Annaud (some secretly filmed on location in Tibet) highlight this adaptation of the memoir by Heinrich Harrer. Brad Pitt stars as the arrogant Heinrich, a famed Austrian mountain climber who leaves behind his wife and infant son to head a Himalayan expedition in 1939, only to fall into the hands of Allied forces as a prisoner of war. He and a fellow escapee, Peter Aufschnaiter (David Thewlis), make their way to the Forbidden City in Tibet, where Peter finds a wife and Heinrich befriends the Western culture-obsessed teenage Dalai Lama (Jamyang Jamtsho Wangchuk), the spiritual leader of his Buddhist nation. As Heinrich waits out the war, his friendship with the Dalai Lama begins to transform him from haughty to humble, but a crisis with China looms. A controversy over the revelation of the real-life Harrer's Nazi Party affiliation brewed during the film's production, forcing Annaud to briefly deal with the subject in the film." Nominated for Best Original Score Golden Globe and Best Foreign Film Award by the Japanese Academy Awards.

**Slumdog Millionaire** (2008): "Accused of cheating and desperate to prove his innocence, an eighteen-year-old orphan from the slums of Mumbai reflects back on his tumultuous life while competing to win 20 million rupees on India's *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* in Danny Boyle's inspirational drama. Jamal Malik ([Dev Patel](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0368072/)) may not have a penny to his name, but that could all change in a matter of hours. He's one question away from taking the top prize on India's most popular television game show, but as with everything else in Jamal's life, it isn't going to be easy. Arrested by police under suspicion of cheating, Jamal is interrogated by the authorities. The police simply can't believe that a common "slumdog" could possibly possess the knowledge to get this far in the game, and in order to convince them of how he gained such knowledge, Jamal begins reflecting back on his childhood. Though life on the streets was never easy, Jamal's experiences ultimately instilled in him the knowledge he needed to answer the tough questions posed to him on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. And though Jamal makes a convincing case for himself, one question still remains: why would a young man with no apparent desire for wealth or fame be so determined to win big on a national game show? Of course, it won't be long until everyone finds out the answer to this burning question, because as Jamal sits down to find out whether he will be rich beyond his wildest dreams, sixty million viewers remain transfixed to their televisions eager to see if he'll correctly answer the final question." Winner of four Golden Globes, including Best Director, Best Motion Picture - Drama, Best Original Score, and Best Screenplay (2009).

**Swades** (2004): "A man searching for clues to his past pays a visit to the place where he was born in this drama laced with romance and music from India. Mohan Bhargava ([Shah Rukh Khan](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000362/)) left the small village in India where he was born and raised to travel to the United States, where he worked as part of the American space program. But after the death of his parents, Mohan becomes nostalgic for his home and takes a leave of absence in order to visit Kaveri (Kishori Ballal), a woman who helped to raise him as a boy. While searching for Kaveri, Mohan becomes reacquainted with Gita (Gayatri Joshi), one of his friends from his school days who has stayed
behind to serve the community as a teacher. Gita thinks little of Mohan's desire to bring Kaveri back to the United States with him, but she also finds herself struck by the charm and intelligence of the adult Mohan, and the two develop a strong infatuation. But many in the community have little regard for Mohan's accomplishments in the United States until he steps forward to help his old neighbors by revamping the village's antiquated electrical system.”

_Tsunami: The Aftermath_ (2006): “A tale of personal loss, survival and hope, _Tsunami: The Aftermath_ follows a group of fictional characters whose lives are irrevocably transformed by the cataclysmic natural disaster. Among those whose stories are followed are: a young couple searching for their child; a Thai survivor who loses his family and tries to prevent developers from seizing the land his village is built on; an Englishwoman whose husband and son are missing; an ambitious reporter; a relief worker; an overwhelmed British official whose faith in the system is torn apart; and a leading Thai meteorologist, whose earlier report detailing the inevitability of a tsunami hitting the affected area was ignored.” Nominated for three Emmy Awards and three Golden Globes (2007).

_The Vertical Ray of the Sun_ (2000): “From the director of _Cyclo_ and _The Scent of Green Papaya_ comes this tale of three sisters who live in close proximity in present-day Hanoi. Lien (Tran Nu Yen Khe), the youngest sister, shares an apartment with her younger brother Hai (Ngo Quang Hai) and works at a cafe run by oldest sister Suong (Nguyen Nhu Quynh). Suong is the wife of Quoc (Chu Hung), a photographer with whom she has a son. The middle sibling Khan (Le Khanh) is married to Kien (Tran Manh Cuong), a writer in the midst of finishing his first novel. Over the course of one month, the family is convened for the anniversary of the death of the sisters’ mother and when reminiscing about their departed matriarch, they bring up the memory of a mysterious man who seems to have been part of their mother’s past. Kien begins to look for clues about Toan’s identity, and Suong reveals that she has been involved with another man. Lien is sharing sleeping quarters with her brother Hai while keeping track of her flighty boyfriend, and fantasizes about being pregnant. During their husbands’ absences, Khan and Suong have a deep conversation about fidelity and reveal secrets they have kept inside for some time; when their husbands return, they begin to question their faithfulness and dedication to them.”

_Water_ (2005): “Following the sudden and unexpected death of her husband, a widowed child bride lashes out against her fate in the Hindu ashram where she is expected to atone for her sins in this humanistic drama, the third installment of filmmaker Deepa Mehta’s _Elemental_ trilogy (_Fire_ (1996), _Earth_ (1998), and _Water_ (2005)). Chuyia’s (Sarala) husband has died, and religious doctrine dictates that she now retire to an ashram to atone for the sins that caused her husband’s untimely death. As Chuyia bides her time among widows both young and old — some accepting of their fate and some bitterly resentful — the preadolescent widow’s spirit remains unbroken and hopeful for a brighter future.” Nominated for Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film (2007).

_Welcome to Sajjanpur_ (2008): “A delightful satirical take on a contemporary Indian village. Mahadev is one of the few educated young men from Sajjanpur. His ambition is to be a novelist but finds it easier to make a living by writing letters sitting next to the post office. His ability to write persuasive letters makes him popular with the largely non-literate population of the town. Aware of this power, he soon uses his talent to manipulate people with amusing and sometimes not so amusing results. With this as the narrative frame, _Welcome to Sajjanpur_ shows in an entertaining, musical and comic way, characters and events that are at once hilarious and poignant.”

_White Rainbow_ (2004): “Every scene in this movie is the truth of what is happening in India today.” ~ Dr. Mohini Giri, India’s leading widows’ rights advocate. When tragedy befalls a privileged Indian wife as she suddenly loses both her husband and unborn child, her pilgrimage to Vrindavan finds her seeking emotional solace in her friendship with three other tragic widows in director Dharan Mandrayar’s thoughtful meditation on the role of the social stigma attached to widowhood in Indian society. Priya’s husband has been killed in a sudden and unexpected
tragedy, and upon receiving the horrific news, she soon miscarries. Suddenly rejected from society and thrust into an unfamiliar world in which the lack of a husband makes one invisible to the masses, Priya sets out on the road to Vrindavan and quickly makes the acquaintance of elder street-smart widow Roop, who has been rejected by her children; kindly Mala, who has been disfigured by her vengeful mother-in-law; and fragile 15-year-old widow and prostitute Deepti. Now, as the tragic quartet takes their fates into their own hands and refuses to accept a grim future of poverty and servitude, Priya, Roop, Mala, and Deepti will discover together that life is truly what one makes of it.”
FILMS of CHINA and KOREA
(87 films)

1911 (2011): “Dexterous martial arts legend Jackie Chan reaches his 100th film milestone with this historical drama set in the year 1911, as the Chinese public begins to revolt against the Qing Dynasty that has ruled the country for 250 years. As the child emperor takes the throne and his mother, Empress Dowager Longyu (Joan Chen), clings to power, famine sweeps the land and warring factions clash in battle. Meanwhile, the “New Army” beings targeting rebels and the desperate leaders of the Qing Dynasty begin putting the country’s future at risk through rampant trading with foreign countries. When Huang Xing (Jackie Chan) returns home from studying modern warfare in Japan, he finds his homeland consumed by strife. Realizing that the only hope for the future is for China to take up arms and topple the Qing Dynasty, Huang enters into an epic battle that threatens devastating consequences for the common people. Bing Bing Lee, Jaycee Chan, and Winston Chao co-star.”

71-Into the Fire (2010): "Experience a masterpiece of world cinema with incredible hyper-realistic full-scale battle sequences to rival The Pacific and Saving Private Ryan. On August 11th, 1950, 71 boy soldiers of the South Korean army single-handedly held back the elite North Korean 766 Commando Brigade for a full 11 hours. Most were still in their school uniforms and had only fired a single bullet in training. Their astonishing bravery under fire enabled allied forces to hold a strategic bridgehead at the Nakdong River and gain a tactical advantage that would help turn the tide of the entire war. Nothing less than the freedom of their nation was at stake. Their ingenuity, tenacity and brotherhood helped them to achieve the impossible. This is their remarkable true story. Discover one of the greatest events in modern military history and relive the day when courage came of age.”

Address Unknown (2001): "Following up on his hallucinatory meditation on sex, death, and fish hooks in The Isle, Korean filmmaker Kim Ki-duk spins this brutal exploration on the lingering anger and exploitation of America's occupation of South Korea. Even though all her letters are returned stamped 'Address Unknown,' a middle-aged woman nevertheless compulsively writes letter after letter to the American soldier with whom she bore an African-American/Korean child. Her son, named Chang-guk, is the object of societal scorn and rejection and can only get a job as a dog butcher, a job he executes with a certain amount of grim pleasure. He finds himself attracted to a high school girl with a degenerative eye condition who is trapped in an abusive relationship with an American G.I. His love for the girl and his free-floating rage against society fuels a violent outburst that changes everyone's lives.”

Aftershock (2010): “Tangshan, 1976. Two seven-year-old twins are buried under the rubble of the deadliest earthquake of the 20th century. The rescue team explains to their mother that freeing either child will almost certainly result in the death of the other. Forced to make the most difficult decision of her life, she finally chooses to save her son. Though left behind as dead, the little girl miraculously survives, unbeknownst to her brother and mother. Aftershock follows the family on their separate journeys over the course of the next 32 years, as they build lives forever shadowed by the traumatic experience of the earthquake, and eventually face each other and the decisions of the past. The acclaimed epic that broke all box-office records in China, Aftershock,
featuring an all-star cast including Jingchu Zhang (Rush Hour 3) and Daoming Chen (Hero), shines with its powerful exploration of how one moment can change a family’s life forever.”

**Ashes of Time** (1994): “Master Hong Kong filmmaker Wong Kar-wai directed this lyrical, dream-like martial arts epic. A famously troubled shoot, the film took two years and forty million dollars to produce (a shocking sum for a national cinema populated with low-budget quickies) and features a virtual who’s-who of the Hong Kong film world. Conceived as a prequel to the popular martial arts novel The Eagle-Shooting Hero by Jin Yong, the movie is less a straightforward action thriller than a visually striking meditation on memory and love. It nominally centers on Ouyang Feng (Leslie Cheung), who ekes out a lonely existence as an itinerant hired sword. Getting on in years and tormented by memories of a lost love, he also works an agent for other mercenary assassins from his remote desert abode. Ouyang’s old friend and fellow swordsman, Huang Yaoshi (Tony Leung Kar-fai) drowns his lovelorn misery in a magical wine that makes him forget. Later, a mysterious young man named Murong Yang (Brigitte Lin) hires Ouyang to kill his sister's unfaithful suitor, Huang Yaoshi. The following day, that spurned sister, Murong Yin (Lin again), hires Ouyang to protect her dearly beloved. Meanwhile, Hong Qi (pop star Jackie Cheung) finds some redemption for a life of killing by accepting a poor girl's offer to avenge her brother's death - a task that Ouyang brusquely shunned. In another subplot, a master swordsman (Tony Leung Chiu Wai) is slowly going blind. He agrees to defend a village from horse thieves so that he can afford to go home and see his wife before his eyesight fails completely.” This film is one of the most celebrated examples of 1990s Hong Kong cinema: it was nominated for and won multiple awards in its native Hong Kong, was awarded the Golden Horse for Best Cinematography and Best Editing, and won a Golden Osella for Best Cinematography at the 1994 Venice Film Festival.

**Autumn Moon** (1992): “This award-winning drama chronicles the adventures of a teen-aged Chinese girl and a Japanese businessman who encounter one another in Hong Kong just prior to that business metropolis’ return to mainland Chinese control. In the story, Tokio is a connoisseur of good Chinese cooking who is taking some vacation time in Hong Kong. His high standards are disappointed by the restaurants in Hong Kong, but when he runs into the fifteen-year-old girl Wai, she takes him home to sample her grandmother's masterful cooking. Wai, who is waiting to join the rest of her family in Canada, leaving her grandmother behind, enjoys her first sexual experience during this time, while Tokio falls for the sister of a former flame.”

**Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress** (2002): “Dai Sijie directs Balzac et La Petite Tailleuse Chinoise (The Little Chinese Seamstress), a film adaptation of his own best-selling autobiographical novel. Set in China during the Cultural Revolution of the 1970s, the story follows Luo (Chen Kun) and Ma (Liu Ye), two young men from the city who are sent to a mountain village for a re-education in Maoist principles. They work with the peasants under the supervision of the village head man (Wang Shuangbao), who considers their violin to be a symbol of the bourgeoisie. Luo and Ma both fall in love with the little Chinese seamstress (Ziou Xun), the daughter of the tailor (Chung Zhijun), and they read her forbidden works of Western literature including French writers Balzac and Dumas. The conclusion finds the two men reminiscing about their experiences 30 years later. Balzac et La Petite Tailleuse Chinoise premiered at the 2002 Cannes Film Festival.” Nominated for Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film (2003).

**A Battle of Warriors (a.k.a. A Battle of Wits)** (2006): “A lone hero comes to the rescue of a village about to be overrun by a marauding army in this historical epic from Hong Kong. In the year 370 B.C., China has been torn apart by a handful of warring factions, and the Zhao State has set out on a long march to invade and conquer the Yan State. En route, the ten thousand-strong Zhao army will pass through the town of Liang City, home to four thousand souls. Led by Lord Liang (Wang Zhiwen), an ineffectual and alcoholic leader, the people of Liang City fear the worse, and beg the warriors of the Mozi clan to come to their aid in protecting the city. As Zhao general Xiang Yanzhong (Ahn Sung-ki) and his men loom on the horizon, a single Mozi fighter, Ge Li (Andy Lau), arrives in Liang City; while the townspeople are certain the battle is already lost, Li is a brilliant strategist, and convinces the handful of Liang soldiers that they can indeed
fend off the Zhao invaders. With the help of Liang cavalry woman Yi Yue (Fan Bingbing) and Zi Tuan (Nicky Wu), a master of the bow and arrow, Li is able to fight the Zhao soldiers to a standstill; however, Lord Liang is humiliated by the success of the interloper, and his right-hand man (Wu Ma) plants seeds of doubt in the villagers’ minds about their new champion.”

**Beijing Bicycle** (2001): “A young man from rural China struggles to make good in Beijing in this drama, which suggests an updated and relocated variation on the neorealist classic *Ladri di Biciclette*. Guei (Cui Lin) is a teenager who arrives in the big city looking for work; he and a handful of other youngsters are hired as bicycle messengers, with their employer giving them new mountain bikes under the condition that they’re paid ten yuan for each message they deliver, and the bicycles are theirs once they’ve made 58 trips. Guei discovers the job is not an easy one, as he deals with the complexity of the huge city, confusion over who gets what message, and the condescending attitude Beijing residents often display toward the new arrivals. Guei is determined to make good and is close to owning his bike when it's stolen; Guei's boss tells him the only way he can keep his job is if he can find the bicycle, which, in a city the size of Beijing, is no easy task. Against all odds, Guei finds the bicycle, but it's now in the hands of Jian (Li Bin), who claims he got it at a second-hand shop and isn't about to give it up. Guei steals the bike back from Jian, but now has to deal with the teenaged tough and his roughneck friends. Shiqisuide Danche was produced as part of a series of films from young Chinese directors called *Tales of Three Cities*, co-produced by French and Taiwanese companies.

**Book and Sword** (2002): “Daniel Li’s martial-arts revenge film *Book and Sword* stars Vincent Zhao as Chan Gar-lok, the leader of a group known as Red Flower Society. The group's failed attempt to assassinate the Emperor results in Chan being exiled. He brings together a new army and attempts to finish the job the right way.”

**Broken Blossoms** (1919): “Based on ‘The Chink and the Child’, a story by Thomas Burke, *Broken Blossoms* is one of D.W. Griffith's most poetic films. Richard Barthelmess plays a young Chinese aristocrat who hopes to spread the gospel of his Eastern religion to the grimy corners of London's Limehouse district. Rapidly disillusioned, Barthelmess opens a curio shop and takes to smoking opium. One evening, Lillian Gish, the waif-like daughter of drunken prizefighter Donald Crisp, collapses on Barthelmess' doorstep after enduring one more of her father's brutal beatings. Barthelmess shelters the girl, providing her with the love and kindness that she has never known. Crisp, offended that his daughter is living with a "heathen," forces the girl to return home with him. In a terrible drunken rage, Crisp beats Lillian to death. Barthelmess arrives on the scene, kills Crisp, then kneels beside Lillian's body and takes his own life.” In 1996 this classic silent film was added to the National Film Registry (U.S.A.).

**By The Will of Genghis Khan** (2009): “Arriving on the heels of Sergei Bodrov's massive arthouse hit *Mongol* (2007), Russian director Andrei Borissov's *By the Will of Genghis Khan* also dramatizes the life and exploits of the titular Mongol warrior who overran China in the late 12th and early 13th centuries. The picture undertakes a unique approach to its subject: in lieu of portraying Khan as a barbaric, psychopathic killer as many western films and books do, this outing paints a picture of him as an unqualified hero and the founder of one of China's most successful dynasties, the Mongol Dynasty. At the time of its production, this motion picture checked in as incredibly expensive by Russian standards, with a budget in excess of $10 million dollars. In an effort to reach a massive international audience, producers enlisted a cast comprised of many western actors, including Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa (Heroes, Memoirs of a Geisha) and Orgil Makhaan, star of the 2005 BBC miniseries *Genghis Khan*.”

**Cat and Mouse** (2003): “Director Gordon Chan (*Fist of Legend*) presents this light romantic action-comedy about a young woman with a secret alter-ego. Andy Lau stars as Zhan, a policeman who's constantly in pursuit of a well-intention and skillful criminal who robs from the rich to give back to the underprivileged. All the while, a romance is blossoming between Zhan and Bai (Cecilia Cheung). Little does Zhan know that the crook and his sweetheart are one and the same. Anthony Wong also stars."
Champion (2002): "Kwak Kyung-taek's Champion is a biopic of Korean boxer Kim Deuk-gu. The film opens at Kim's fateful final fight against Ray Mancini, but almost immediately flashes back to Kim's difficult childhood. As he goes from one menial job to another, Kim learns how to fight. He strikes up a relationship with Lee Kyeong-mi (Chae Min-seo), but her father does not want his daughter involved with a boxer. Kim falls into a coma after the bout with Mancini. The film concludes with a segment about Kim's son and his life over a decade after the fight occurred."

Children of Huang Shi (2008): "As China is ravaged by war in the late '30s, a young English journalist named George Hogg (Jonathan Rhys-Meyers) leads six orphans over the Liu Pan Shan mountains and into the safety of the Mongolian desert. Joining the journalist and the children on their arduous journey are an American nurse (Radha Mitchell) and the fearless leader of a Chinese partisan group (Chow Yun-Fat). The journey won't be easy, but as they boldly forge forward through snow-covered mountains and unforgiving desert, they learn the true meaning of responsibility, courage, and love. Jane Hawksley penned this drama based on actual events and it was directed by renowned filmmaker Roger Spottiswoode."

Chungking Express (1994): "A Hong Kong fast food restaurant acts as the link between two unusual stories of police officers in love in this eccentric, stylish comedy-drama. Director Wong Kar-Wai plays freely with traditional narrative structure, dividing his film into two loosely connected segments. The first centers on a depressed cop struggling to come to terms with a recent break-up. His sad isolation is transformed when he encounters a beautiful, mysterious femme fatale, whose involvement with the criminal underworld proves troublesome for both. The second story explores the odd relationship between a female restaurant worker and another recently jilted police officer. The strange woman decides to regularly clean and redecorate the man's apartment in his absence, allowing the two to form a close intimacy without meeting face to face. Both stories present a beautifully atmospheric look at modern urban life and romance, with its combination of isolation and casual, unexpected meetings. Chungking Express came to the attention of American audiences thanks to the efforts of director Quentin Tarantino, whose own brand of fractured storytelling and urban cool owes a debt to Wong Kar-Wai."

The Civilization of Maxwell Bright (2005): "Fed up with American women and determined to procure a docile Asian wife, an angry L.A. misogynist gets a mail order bride in this romantic re-imagining of Beauty and the Beast starring Patrick Warburton, Marie Matiko, and Jennifer Tilly. Max Bright (Warburton) is fed up with independent, strong-willed women, and now all he wants is a wife who doesn't know the meaning of the word "no." Despite the fact that he's completely ignorant when it comes to the subject of Eastern cultures, Maxwell decides to marry a mail order bride. Later, after Mai Ling (Matiko) arrives in L.A. to discover just what a brute her new American husband truly is, the couple is forced to contend with a devastating development that could bring them closer than ever while profoundly affecting the way that Max perceives the opposite sex."

Confucius (2010): "From the producer of Red Cliff and Warlords and shot in the same lavish style, Confucius stars superstar Chow Yun-Fat (Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon) as the legendary hero of the title: a man who lead the kingdom of Lu in battle against its warmongering neighbor, Qi.” Winner of Hong Kong Film Award for Best Cinematography (2011).

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000): "Taiwanese filmmaker Ang Lee took a break from making Western period dramas to fashion this wild and woolly martial arts spectacular featuring special effects and action sequences courtesy of the choreographer of The Matrix (1999), Yuen Woo Ping. In the early 19th century, martial arts master Li Mu Bai (Chow Yun-Fat) is about to retire and enter a life of meditation, though he quietly longs to avenge the death of his master, who was killed by Jade Fox (Cheng Pei-pei). He gives his sword, a fabled 400-year-old weapon known as Green Destiny, to his friend, fellow martial arts wizard and secret love Yu Shu Lien (Michelle Yeoh), so that she may deliver it to Sir Te (Sihung Lung). Upon arrival in Peking, Yu happens upon Jen (Zhang Ziyi), a vivacious, willful politician's daughter. That night, a mysterious masked thief swipes Green Destiny, with Yu in hot pursuit — resulting in the first of several martial arts action set pieces during the film. Li arrives in Beijing and eventually discovers that
Jen is not only the masked thief but is also in cahoots with the evil Jade. In spite of this, Li sees great talent in Jen as a fighter and offers to school her in the finer points of martial arts and selflessness, an offer that Jen promptly rebukes. This film was first screened to much acclaim at the 2000 Cannes, Toronto, and New York film festivals and became a favorite when Academy Awards nominations were announced in 2001: Tiger snagged ten nominations and later secured four wins for Best Cinematography, Score, Art Direction, and Foreign Language Film.

*Curse of the Golden Flower* (2006): "A dying love between two powerful people leads to deceit, infidelity, and conspiracy in this epic-scale historical drama from director Zhang Yimou. During the latter days of the Tang dynasty, the Emperor (Chow Yun-Fat) returns home from the war with his son Prince Jai (Jay Chou) in tow. However, the monarch gets a chilly reception from the Empress (Gong Li); though she's eager to see her son, her marriage has become deeply acrimonious, and she's taken a lover, Crown Prince Wan (Liu Ye), her stepson from the Emperor's first marriage. The Emperor, meanwhile, has his own plan for dealing with his failing marriage — he's ordered the Imperial Doctor (Ni Dahong) to find an exotic drug that will drive the Empress insane and administer it to her without her knowledge. However, the doctor's ethical dilemma is intensified by the fact his daughter Chan (Li Man) has fallen in love with Crown Prince Wan and the two wish to elope. As the Emperor and Empress allow their estrangement to sink into violence and retribution, their youngest son, Prince Yu (Qin Junjie), struggles to keep the peace in the household."

Nominated for Best Achievement in Costume Design Academy Award (2007); nominated for fourteen and winner of four Hong Kong Film Awards, including Best Actress, Best Art Direction, Best Costume and Make-up Design, and Best Original Film Song (2007).

*Detective Dee and the Mystery of the Phantom Flame* (2010): “China's first master detective is looking for answers to some burning questions in this blend of historical drama and mystery from acclaimed director Tsui Hark. Di Renjie (Andy Lau), nicknamed Detective Dee, is a law officer of the Tang Dynasty who is legendary for his powers of deductive reasoning. Di Renjie finds himself on the wrong side of prison bars when he dares to publicly criticize Wu Zetian (Carina Lau), who has become China's first female emperor. While Wu Zetian doesn't care for Di Renjie's opinions, she can't dispute his skills as a detective, and after eight years in jail she has him released so he can get to the bottom of a mystery. Two members of Wu Zetian's court have died under bizarre circumstances -- after stepping outside, they suddenly exploded into flames. Are the gods angry with Wu Zetian and her underlings, or is a clever saboteur at work? *Di Renjie Zhi Tong Tian Di Guo* (aka *Detective Dee and the Mystery of the Phantom Flame*) was inspired by the exploits of the real-life Di Renjie, who is credited with pioneering modern detective techniques during the Tang Dynasty (618 A.D. to 907 A.D.)."

*Devils on the Doorstep* (2000): “Renowned actor Jiang Wen directs this sweeping look at a small Chinese village located near the Great Wall during the closing days of WWII. As Japanese soldiers march up and down the village's main thoroughfare, Ma Dasan (Wen) is making love with his widowed lover Yu’er (Jiang Hongbo). Suddenly, there is a knock at the door and a gun at Ma's head. He is informed that for the next week he is to house two gagged and bound prisoners, one a fanatical Japanese soldier, the other a Chinese translator - and to interrogate the pair. The village elders uneasily question the two, while the translator intentionally mistranslates the epitaphs and insults from the soldier. When the Chinese resistance fighters do not return to pick up the prisoners, the villagers panic and order Ma to execute them. Ma, in turn, panics and tries to hide the cantankerous duo in the Great Wall - that is until the villagers discover his ruse and almost Lynch him, despite a strongly worded defense by Yu’er. Six months later, the villagers become increasingly worried about boarding these prisoners, lest they all be branded collaborators. This film won the prestigious Grand Prix and was nominated for the Golden Palm at the 2000 Cannes Film Festival."   

*Double Happiness* (1994): “Family ghosts, generational conflict, and the immigrant experience frame this episodic comedy-drama about a Chinese-born Canadian woman's quest for self-definition, which marked the debut of writer/director Mina Shum. Jade Li (Sandra Oh), an aspiring actress in her early twenties, lives at home with her strict father (Stephen Chang), her dutiful mother (Alannah Ong), and her sweet younger sister, Pearl (Frances You). Their
older brother, Winston, has been disowned — a fate Jade is not eager to share, both for her own sake and to spare her family pain. Therefore, although she manages to land a few bit parts on camera, Jade spends most of her time working in the shop owned by a family friend, performing the duties of a respectful daughter and suffering through arranged dates with prosperous young Chinese men. An adept cultural chameleon, though, she also leads a double life, hanging out with best friend Lisa (Claudette Carracedo) and beginning a tentative romance with Caucasian college student Mark (Callum Keith Rennie). When her father's childhood friend arrives for a visit, however, Jade must juggle her competing identities even more carefully than usual, lest her choice of professions - and boyfriends - shame her father. After premiering at the 1994 Toronto International Film Festival, Double Happiness won several international awards and made its U.S. bow at Sundance in 1995. Writer/director Shum - who, like her protagonist, was born in Hong Kong but raised in Canada - appears briefly on camera as a casting director who doesn't think Jade is Chinese enough. Oh, who is actually of Korean descent, won a Best Actress Genie Award (the Canadian equivalent of an Oscar) for her portrayal of Jade. The part of Dad Li marked a departure for Chang, a frequent martial arts movie villain and real-life friend of Bruce Lee.”

Eat, Drink, Man, Woman (1994): “Director Ang Lee's follow-up to his surprise box-office hit The Wedding Banquet is another look at ethnic and sexual conflicts in a Chinese family, with meals as a centerpiece of the film. Master chef Chu (Sihung Lung) is a long-time widower who lovingly cooks large Sunday dinners for his three daughters, who view the meals as too traditional. Secretly, however, successful airline executive Jia-Chien (Chien-Lien Wu) loves traditional cooking and would like to be a chef like her father, if women were permitted to do so. Her older sister Jia-Jen (Kuei-Mei Yang) is unmarried and cynical about men, but she becomes attracted to a volleyball coach and eventually pursues him vigorously. The youngest daughter, Jia-Ning (Yu-Wen Wang), is a college student who becomes pregnant from her frequent sexual escapades. As the film progresses, the personal relationships between the daughters and their significant others change unexpectedly.” Nominated for an Academy Award and a Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film (1995).

An Empress and the Warriors (2008): “Two very different men vie for the affection of a beautiful and powerful woman in this historical epic from Hong Kong. During the Era of the Warring States, two rival kingdoms are fighting for control of China, the Yan and the Zhao. Muyong Xuehu (Donnie Yen) is leader of the Yan armies and guides his forces to victory, but not before the Yan emperor is murdered. Muyong is declared the new emperor of the Yan territories, angering Wu Ba (Guo Xiaodong), the late leader's nephew who killed his uncle in hopes of taking the throne. There is much public discord over Muyong's appointment, so he names as his second in command Yan Fei'er (Kelly Chen), the late king's beautiful daughter and only child. Muyong is in love with Yan Fei'er and wants to protect her, but she's a brave and headstrong woman, unafraid to put herself in the heat of battle. When a would-be killer attempts to murder Yan Fei'er, she's rescued by an unlikely benefactor, Duan Lanquan (Leon Lai), an aspiring inventor who loves in the woods. Yan Fei'er falls for the clever Duan, who has invented a machine that can fly, and when she learns that the Yan kingdom is once again under attack, she must choose between her two lovers as she returns to her people's battle for freedom.” Nominated for Best Art Direction and Best Costume and Makeup Design at the Hong Kong Film Awards (2009).

Farewell My Concubine (1993): “Critically acclaimed as one of the best films of the year, this seductive, award-winning triumph captivated moviegoers the world over. It's the compelling tale of two lifelong friends unexpectedly caught in a passionate love triangle with the woman who comes between them. Academy Award(R)-nominated Farewell My Concubine (1993 - Best Foreign Language Film) earned the Golden Globe as Best Foreign Film in addition to claiming Best Picture honors at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival! Packed with vivid, provocative imagery throughout, this sensual story of love and betrayal is the hot and exotic must-see movie of the year.”
**Flowers of Shanghai** (1998): "Hou Hsiao-hsien (Goodbye South, Goodbye) directed this Taiwanese-Japanese period drama set in the British section brothels of 19th-century Shanghai. Chu Tien-wen's screenplay was adapted from Han Ziyun's 1894 novel *Haishang Huia Liezhuang (Biographies of Flowers of Shanghai)*, translated from the original dialect to Mandarin during the 1930s by Shanghai writer Eileen Chang. Around 1884, during the closing years of Imperial China, Crimson (Japanese actress Michiko Hada) worries that she's about to be dropped by civil servant Wang (Tony Leung Chiu-wai), since he's spending so much time with Jasmin (Wei Hsiao-hui). Emotions escalate when word arrives that Wang will relocate to another post in the Canton province." Shown in competition at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival.

**Flowers of War** (2011): "American John Miller (Christian Bale) seeks sanctuary in a Chinese cathedral during the 1937 Nanking Massacre, hiding out from Japanese Imperial forces alongside courtesans and frightened schoolgirls as a shocking crime against humanity unfolds just outside." Nominated for a Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Film and a Hong Kong Film Award for Best Chinese Language Film (2011).

**The Forbidden Kingdom** (2008): "Legendary martial arts stars Jackie Chan and Jet Li come together onscreen for the first time ever in director Rob Minkoff's time-traveling take on the Monkey King fable that finds an American teen transported back to ancient China after wandering into a pawn shop and discovering the king's fighting stick. Once there, the adventurous teen joins an army of fierce warriors who have sworn to free their imprisoned king at all costs. In addition to appearing as the mythical Monkey King, Li assumes the role of a silent monk, and Chan appears in the role of kung fu master Lu Yan. Famed action choreographer Yuen Woo Ping presides over the fight sequences."

**Four Dragons** (1992): "A fearless Chinese immigrant uses Wushu to defend his people from a violent gang of brothers in this period martial arts action thriller starring Michael Chin and David Bao. When Chinese immigrants descend upon a small mining town, they immediately clash with a gang of vengeful siblings. Only by employing the lethal power of Wushu will the brave warrior succeed in awakening the power of the Four Dragons and defeating an enemy of unprecedented strength."

**The Front Line** (2011): "The battle for a strategic stronghold heats up as the Korean War winds to a bloody close in this war drama from Rough Cut director Jang Hoon. Korea is in crisis; and as soldiers from both the north and south clash over a coveted hill that will offer the winner a clear advantage, a soldier named Kang heads to the front line to try and get the situation in perspective. Meanwhile, as whispers of a cease-fire grow louder, the fighting only becomes more intense and Kang crosses paths with his old friend Kim, who seems to thrive on the chaos of combat."

**The Good Earth** (1937): "Based on Donald Davis and Owen Davis' stage-adaptation of Pearl S. Buck's sprawling novel, Sidney Franklin's *The Good Earth* is the story of a Chinese farming couple whose lives are torn apart by poverty, greed, and nature. Paul Muni stars as Wang Lung a hardworking, but poor, farmer who weds freed-slave O-Lan (Luise Rainer). They struggle to build a life together, but after finally finding success, a plague of locusts descends upon their land, bringing a true test of the couple's perseverance. For her performance, Luise Rainer won the second of back-to-back Best Actress Oscars, while cinematographer Karl Freund took home an Academy Award for his photography work. *The Good Earth* was the final film production of Irving Thalberg, who died at 37 before the film was completed."

**Goodbye Dragon Inn** (2003): "In a cavernous movie palace, King Hu's classic 1968 film *Dragon Inn* plays for a sparse crowd. As the movie progresses, the ticket-taker makes dinner, cleans the bathroom, and checks in on the projectionist. Audience members wander in and out, occasionally interacting in the restroom or the vast hallways that surround the theater proper. Minimally plotted, Tsai Ming-Liang's film is a poetic, dryly humorous portrait of a place and its denizens, and an homage to a director who influenced his career."
**Hero** (2002): "Hero is two-time Academy Award nominee Zhang Yimou's directorial attempt at exploring the concept of a Chinese hero. During the peak of their Warring States period, China was divided into seven kingdoms all fighting for supremacy. Most determined to dominate China was the kingdom of Qin, whose king (Chen Daoming) was wholly obsessed with becoming the first emperor of China. Though he was an assassination target for many, none of his would-be killers inspired as much fear as the legendary assassins Broken Sword (Tony Leung), Flying Snow (Maggie Cheung), and Sky (Donnie Yen). In hopes of thwarting his death, the king has promised endless wealth and power to anyone who defeats his would-be murderers. No results come until ten years later, when a man called Nameless (Jet Li) brings the weapons of the three assassins to the Qin king's palace. Nameless claims to be an expert swordsman who had defeated Sky and destroyed the famed duo of Flying Snow and Broken Sword by using their love for one another against them. Once Nameless comes face to face with the king, however, it looks as if the situation is more complicated than he had thought. Also featured in Hero is actress Zhang Ziyi (The Road Home, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon) as Broken Sword's devoted servant, Moon." Also nominated for fourteen and winner of seven Hong Kong Film Awards (2003).

**Hong Kong 1941** (1984): "This melodrama is one of many that have embraced the period setting of Hong Kong during the Japanese occupation of World War II. Chow Yun-Fat, in an award-winning performance, plays a poor worker at a small rice shop. He befriends a rickshaw driver (Alex Mann) who falls in love with the shop owner's daughter. When the shop owner forbids the couple to marry, the trio decides to runaway to mainland China. However, their plan is interrupted by the Japanese invasion, and their friendship and loyalty is put to the test in the events that follow. Similar to films like Casablanca, Hong Kong 1941 is a good example of how Hong Kong cinema has made much use of this period and the theme of love in a desperate time. However, the film also depicts the brutality that occurred during the occupation, and the portrayal of the Japanese invasion force in this film reflects a deep resentment that parallels the representations of the German Nazis in Western film."

**House of Flying Daggers** (2004): "Chinese director Zhang Yimou fuses a martial arts action-drama with a tragic romance in this elegant period piece. In the year 859 A.D., as the Tang dynasty is beset by rebellion, Leo (Andy Lau) and Jin (Takeshi Kaneshiro) are a pair of lawmen who have been given the task of ferreting out the leaders of a revolutionary faction known as the Flying Daggers. Working on a tip that members of the group are working out of a brothel called the Peony Pavilion, Jin arrives there in disguise and is introduced to a beautiful blind dancer named Mei (Zhang Ziyi). After watching Mei's performance following several drinks, Jin drunkenly attempts to have his way with her, and Leo is forced to intervene. After gaining Mei's trust in a game of skill, Leo arrests her and informs her that she'll be tortured if she doesn't tell all she knows about the Flying Daggers. Jin responds by helping Mei break out of prison, but he has an ulterior motive — by following her, Leo and Jin are certain she'll lead them to the Flying Daggers. However, as he helps the blind girl find her way back home, Jin finds himself falling in love with Mei, and isn't certain if he's willing to betray her again." Nominated for Best Achievement in Cinematography Oscar (2005), Best Foreign Language Film Golden Globe (2005), Best Asian Film at the Hong Kong Film Awards (2005) and four Golden Rooster Awards (2004); winner of Golden Rooster Award for Best Art Direction (2004).

**Ip Man** (2008): "Yu-Hang To stars as famed martial arts master Ip Man in this biographical drama from director Herman Yau (The Untold Story, Taxi Hunter). Growing up, Ip Man, his adopted sibling Ip Tin-chi, and their friend Ng Chung-sok studied Wing Chun under famed master Chan Wah-shun. Later continuing his lessons with Ng Chung-sok, Ip Man ultimately set his sights on Hong Kong while developing an innovative new form of the popular martial art under Leung Bik. Later, after enduring many great hardships, Ip Man returns to his hometown and falls in love with Cheung Wing-shing -- the daughter of a prominent Foshan politician - leaving lovelorn Lee Mei-wai open to marry Ip Tin-chi. Ip Man's perceived integrity takes a big hit, however, when he is arrested for murdering Lee Mei-wai's godfather, and must fight to prove his innocence"
**Jade Warrior** (2006): “Writer/director Antti-Jussi Annila’s picture *Jade Warrior* (Jade Soturi) takes as its starting-off point an arresting and little-known fact -- the similarity of Chinese and Finnish mythologies -- and uses it to combine two seemingly unrelated genres: the quirky Finnish fantasy (typified by the works of Kaurismaki) and the Chinese martial arts film. Inspired by a well-known Finnish epic called The Kalevala, the story opens with a down-on-his-luck hardware merchant who gets dumped by his girlfriend. She tries to dispose of his collection of Asian artifacts at an antique dealer, but this sets off a mythical series of events that turns the merchant into a warrior prince, fated to battle a demon in icy northern Finland, responsible for enslaving all of humankind. The prince is abetted -- and then ultimately betrayed -- by a two-faced female warrior who has captured his heart and thus carries his greatest weakness in her hands. The battle involves enchanted boxes, spectacular swordfights, and supernatural events that come together -- simultaneously -- in an isolated cabin on the outskirts of Helsinki and in the rural Chinese mountains.”

**Jet Li's Fearless** (2006): “*Fearless* is based on the real-life story of Huo Yuanjia, founder of the Jingwu school of martial arts opens in Shanghai. The film opens in China, circa 1910, when wushu master Huo Yuanjia (martial arts superstar Jet Li) prepares to battle one Japanese opponent, Tanaka (Shidou Nakamura), and three American opponents (Anthony de Longis, Jean-Claude Leuyer, and Brandon Rhea) in a massive tournament. The picture then cuts back to Huo's boyhood in the city of Tianjin, in North China, circa 1880, when his father forbids him from engaging in martial-arts training. He must therefore slip off and train covertly. Around 1900, Huo — then in his twenties — continues to fight in tournaments. His determination is such that his entire life begins to revolve around championships, and the prospect of becoming the top-ranked fighter in Tianjin turns into a die-hard obsession, despite the repeated warnings of his best friend, Nong (Dong Yong), to cut back. Huo ignores these admonitions, then turns conceited and ultimately refuses to hear an additional word of caution, until his arrogance leads to the death of a fighter and Nong's decision to abandon him as a friend. Driven into exile, Huo journeys to southeastern Asia, where he works alongside rice farmers and divests himself of conceit, then gently touches the spirit of a blind girl. When he finally returns to Tianjin, he has transformed, internally, into a different person altogether. A huge hit in Hong Kong when originally released into theaters in 2006, *Fearless* was often touted as Jet Li's final film in the wushu school of martial arts.” Nominated for seven Hong Kong Film Awards; winner of Best Action Cinematography award.

**Joy Luck Club** (1993): “Director Wayne Wang and screenwriter Ronald Bass effectively interweave sixteen mother-daughter tales in their silken film version of Amy Tan's best-selling novel about the clash between generations. The film takes place in present-day San Francisco, concentrating on a group of late-middle-aged Chinese women. Ever since arriving in the United States after World War II, the women have gathered weekly to play mah-jongg and to tell stories, regaling each other with tales of their children and grandchildren, giving each other a sense of hope and renewal in the midst of poverty and hardship. The Joy Luck Club is made up of four women — Suyuan (Kieu Chinh), Lindo (Tsai Chin), Ying Ying (France Nuyen), and An Mei (Lisa Lu). But when Suyuan dies, the three surviving members invite Suyuan's daughter June (Ming-Na Wen) to take her place. Along with the daughters of the other members — Waverly (Tamlyn Tomita), Lena (Lauren Tom), and Rose (Rosalind Chao) — June is a Chinese-American with only a passing interest in her rich cultural heritage. But through vignettes that switch back and forth in time, the daughters begin to appreciate the struggles of their mothers to start their families in the optimistic promise of the United States.”

**The King of Masks** (1996): “This tender Chinese tale of an aged street performer who begins teaching a young child is filled with warm humanity but not imbued with undue sentiment. It is set about seventy years in the past and centers on elderly Wang Bian Lian, who travels the street performing with his pet monkey. Just looking at him it would be hard to tell that he is a master of the rapid changing face masks technique that characterizes Sichuan opera. He came to the streets thirty years before, after his wife abandoned him, and now he seeks to pass on his technique to a young boy. Liang, a well-known actor specializing in female roles wants to learn
the skill, but Wang politely refuses to teach him. Wang finally gets his candidate when he buys ‘Doggie,’ a young child from a starving family. Doggie’s presence adds renewed zest to Wang’s life. One day the child falls ill and Wang sells one of his few priceless heirlooms to save him. This leads him to learn that Doggie is not a ‘he’ at all. Wang still cares, but he is heartbroken for only a boy can learn the face-changing skill. Doggie begs him to let her stay and to teach her to be an acrobat. He agrees to this and continues looking for a boy. One day, Doggie accidentally burns up Wang’s boat. Horrified, she flees into the city only to secretly return later with a baby that she had rescued from kidnappers. Wang, not knowing who bestowed the gift of the child, is delighted. Unfortunately the child’s wealthy parents learn that he has it. Wang is arrested and sentenced to death. Fortunately, Doggie is determined to save him.”

_The Last Emperor_ (1987): “The Last Emperor is the true story of Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi, the last ruler of the Chinese Ching Dynasty. Told in flashback, the film covers the years 1908 to 1967. We first see the three-year-old Pu Yi being installed in the Forbidden City by ruthless, dying dowager Empress Tzu-Hsui (Lisa Lu). Though he’d prefer to lark about like other boys, the infant emperor is cossetted and cajoled into accepting the responsibilities and privileges of his office. In 1912, the young emperor (Tijer Tsou) forced to abdicate when China is declared a republic, is a prisoner in his own palace, ‘protected’ from the outside world. Fascinated by the worldliness of his Scottish tutor (Peter O’Toole), Pu Yi plots an escape from his cocoon by means of marriage. He selects Manchu descendant Wan Jung (Joan Chen), who likewise is anxious to experience the 20th century rather than be locked into the past by tradition. Played as an adult by John Lone, Pu Yi puts into effect several social reforms, and also clears the palace of the corrupt eunuchs who’ve been shielding him from life. In 1924, an invading warlord expels the denizens of the Forbidden City, allowing Pu Yi to ‘westernize’ himself by embracing popular music and the latest dances as a guest of the Japanese Concession in Tientsin. Six years later, his power all but gone, Pu Yi escapes to Manchuria, where he unwittingly becomes a political pawn for the now-militant Japanese government. Humiliating his faithful wife, Pu Yi falls into bad romantic company, carrying on affairs with a variety of parasitic females. During World War II, the Japanese force Pu Yi to sign a series of documents which endorse their despotic military activities. At war’s end, the emperor is taken prisoner by the Russians; while incarcerated, he is forced to fend for himself without servants at his beck and call for the first time. He is finally released in 1959 and displayed publicly as proof of the efficacy of Communist re-education. We last see him in 1967, the year of his death; now employed by the State as a gardener, Pu Yi makes one last visit to the Forbidden City...as a tourist. Bernardo Bertolucci’s first film after a six-year self-imposed exile, _The Last Emperor_ was released in two separate versions: the 160-minute theatrical release, and a 4-hour TV miniseries. Shot on location, the film won nine Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Director.” Winner of Best Foreign Language Film at the Awards of the Japanese Academy; nominated for five and winner of four Golden Globes, including Best Motion Picture - Drama and Best Director; winner of Grammy Award for Best Album of Original Instrumental Background Score (1989).

_Last Train Home_ (2009): “Every spring, China’s cities are plunged into chaos as an astonishing 130 million migrant workers journey to their home villages for the New Year’s holiday. This mass exodus is the largest human migration on the planet - an epic spectacle that reveals a country tragically caught between its rural past and industrial future. Working over several years in classic verité style Chinese-Canadian filmmaker Lixin Fan (with the producers of the hit documentary _Up the Yangtze_) travels with one couple who have embarked on this annual trek for almost two decades. Like so many of China’s rural poor, Zhang Changhua and Chen Suqin left behind their two infant children for grueling factory jobs. Their daughter Qin - now a restless teenager - both bitterly resents their absence and longs for her own freedom away from school, much to the utter devastation of her parents. Emotionally powerful and starkly beautiful, the multi-award-winning _Last Train Home_’s intimate observation of one fractured family sheds unprecedented light on the human cost of China’s economic ‘miracle.’”
**Legend of the Black Scorpion** (2006): “*A World Without Thieves* director Feng Xiaogang shifts his focus from modern-day con artists to tenth century intrigue with this tale of internal turmoil in the age of Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms starring Zhang Ziyi, Daniel Wu, and Ge You. Her empire on the verge of a massive revolution as storms begin to brew both within the royal court as well as in the outlying kingdoms, the entrancing Empress Wan (Zhang) gazes upon her stepson, Prince Wu Luan (Wu), with the eyes of a forbidden lover rather than a caring mother. When the emperor dies an unexpected death and his younger brother Li (Ge) ascends to the throne, Empress Wan marries the newly appointed sovereign as a means of both protecting her beloved Wu Luan and cementing her position within the royal court. When assassins dispatched by Emperor Li fail in their attempt to silence Wu Luan and his majesty subsequently announces a lavish banquet, Empress Wan and Wu Luan realize that the time has finally come for them to take action against the murderous despot. The film demonstrates tremendous influence by Shakespearean plays, specifically *Hamlet* and *Macbeth.*”

**Lust and Caution** (2007): “Academy Award-winning director Ang Lee adapts this Eileen Chang story set in World War II-era Shanghai that details the political intrigue surrounding a powerful political figure named Mr. Yee (Tony Leung) in Japanese-occupied Shanghai. Spanning the late ‘30s and early ‘40s, the movie introduces us to Hong Kong teen Wong Chia Chi (Tang Wei), a shy college freshman who finds her calling in a drama society devoted to patriotic plays. But the troupe’s leader, Kuang Yu Min (Wang Leehom), isn’t just a theater maven - he's a revolutionary as well, and he’s devoted to carrying out a bold plan to assassinate top Japanese collaborator Mr. Yee. Each student has an important role to play, and Wong puts herself in a dangerous position as Mrs. Mak; she befriends Mr. Yee’s wife (Joan Chen), and slowly gains trust before tempting him into an affair. While at first the plan goes exactly as scripted, things suddenly take a deadly turn and Wong is emigrated from Hong Kong. Later, in 1941, the occupation shows no signs of ceasing and Wong is simply drifting through her days in Shanghai. Much to her surprise, the former actress finds Kuang requesting that she resume the role of Mrs. Mak. Now, as Wong again gains intimate access to her dangerous prey, she must struggle with her own identity in order to pull off the performance of a lifetime.” Nominated for thirteen and winner of nine Golden Horse Film Festival Awards, including Best Director and Best Actor; nominated for six and winner of one Asian Film Awards (for Best Actor); nominated for Best Foreign Language Film Golden Globe (2008).

**Mao’s Last Dancer** (2009): “The true story of Li Cunxin and his journey from rural China to the bright lights of ballet stardom is brought to the screen in this biographical drama from director Bruce Beresford. In 1972, 11-year-old Li Cunxin (Huang Wenbin) is living with his parents, Niang (Joan Chen) and Dia (Wang Shuangbao), and six siblings while attending a tumbledown school in Shandog province. Li's life changes when representatives of Madame Mao's Beijing Dance Academy visit his school, and he is one of several students believed to have promise as a dancer. While life at the school is difficult for Li and many of the instructors are harsh and unforgiving, Chan (Zhang Su) takes the boy under his wing and grooms him into one of the school's star pupils. In 1981, Li (now played by Chi Cao) is chosen to travel to the United States as part of a student exchange with the Houston Ballet Company. Under the tutelage of Ben Stevenson (Bruce Greenwood), the company's director, Li impresses his peers and is given a key role in a televised production of Die Fledermaus; despite an attack of stage fright, Li's performance is a triumph. As Li came to love life in the United States, he also falls for an attractive young dancer, Elizabeth (Amanda Schull), and when his time in America draws to a close, he makes the decision to leave his old life behind and pursue a life of personal and creative freedom in America. Also starring Kyle MacLachlan and Camilla Vergotis, *Mao’s Last Dancer* received its world premiere at the 2009 Toronto International Film Festival.

**Marco Polo** (2007): “A journey that starts as a die-hard mission to net Christian converts soon evolves into the adventure of a lifetime, in the sweeping historical epic *Marco Polo*. It is the 13th century. Polo (Ian Somerhalder), a Venetian trader, sets out to both prove the existence of China to European priests, and to bring its residents salvation. En route, he and his traveling companions must battle every extreme form of the elements, from the scorching abuse of the
sun to paralyzing blizzards, plus violent marauding thieves and a host of other dangers. Little can Marco Polo predict, however, the dazzling world that awaits him on the opposite end - with such dazzling inventions as paper money, timepieces and a postal system, and such culinary concoctions as ice cream and pasta. And presiding over all of it is the benevolent Kubla Khan (Brian Dennehy) a ruler so impressed with Polo (and vice versa) that the brave adventurer soon becomes part and parcel of his court - and spends the better part of two decades in Asia. Kevin Connor directs, from a script by Ron Hutchinson."

*Mongol: The Rise to Power of Genghis Khan* (2007): "First entry in a proposed trilogy, *Mongol* vividly captures the beauty and brutality of ancient Mongolia. Beginning in 1172 and ending in 1206, Sergei Bodrov's Oscar-nominated epic presents future conqueror Ghengis Khan as more lover--and fighter--than diplomat. Against his father Essegui's wishes, nine-year-old Temudjin chooses his own bride, whom he marries in the years to come. Hopes for the future, however, turns to thoughts of vengeance when the clan forsakes the boy upon Essegui's death. While Temudjin (now played by *Zatoichi* Tadanobu Asano, a quietly commanding presence) makes his way in a cruel world, turncoat Targutai (Amadu Mamadakov) becomes the new khan. When an opposing clan kidnaps Temudjin's wife, Börte (Khulan Chuluun), he eventually retrieves her, but betrays blood brother Jamukha (Sun Honglei, *Seven Swords*) in the process, leading to further enslavement and more Kurasawa-style slicing and dicing. Throughout his travails, Temudjin comes to believe that Mongols must unite to share the same language, culture, and set of values. Sustained by his faith in the god Tengri and the devotion of Börte, Temudjin sets out to wrest control of Mongolia from Jamukha and his women and children-killing hordes. Except for an over-reliance on CGI during the climactic battle sequence, *Mongol* equals the scope and grandeur of historical predecessors, like *Braveheart* and *Hero*. If much of the cast is Chinese and Japanese, Bodrov, who directed *Prisoner of the Mountains*, conjures up authenticity through detailed costumes, Mongolian dialogue, and remote Central Asian locations." Nominated for Best Foreign Language Film of the Year Oscar (2008).

*Mountain Patrol (Kekexili)* (2004): "When Beijing journalist Ga Yu arrives at the mystical camp of the Kekexili Mountain Patrol, he witnesses a Tibetan funeral and a village in mourning. Ga Yu is determined to uncover the real story behind the mysterious disappearance of patrol volunteers, the killing of rare Tibetan antelopes and the rumor that the Mountain Patrol collaborates with the poachers. Ga Yu joins a patrol headed out into 40,000 square kilometers of wilderness. The illegal hunters are like phantoms in the uninhabited land, hiding in caves, tracking the patrol members like sinister shadows, waiting for the right moment to launch their deadly attack -- the patrolmen have become the hunted. Despite the severe environment, the patrol led by Ri Tai risk their lives in the fight against the callous poachers. At first an observer, distanced by the lens of his camera, Ga Yu slowly becomes personally involved in the struggle. He gradually becomes aware that this is not just a regular patrol but a journey about life. To the patrol members, Kekexili is their homeland as well as it is the habitat of the antelopes. In the transmigration of life, they will always be on guard for the homeland. Through the eyes of Ri Tai and the other patrolmen, Ga Yu witnesses the real beauty of their lives: their faith." Winner of Golden Horse Awards for Best Cinematography and Best Film and nominated for Best Actor, Best Director and Best Original Screenplay (2004); winner of Golden Rooster Award for Best Film and nominated for Best Actor, Best Director, Best Music, Best Screenplay and Best Sound (2005); winner of Best Asian Film at the Hong Kong Film Awards (2006).

*Musa the Warrior* (2001): "Touted as the most expensive Korean film ever produced, *Musa* is a sweeping real-life epic about an official envoy from Koryo (ancient Korea) struggling to stay alive in war-torn China. The film is set in 1375 when the Yuan dynasty collapses after a 100-year reign against the insurgent Ming. As the Ming dynasty solidifies power pushing the remaining Yuan armies to the north and west, Koryo sends a delegation of diplomats to shore up their strained relations with the new government. Upon arrival the lead diplomat is thrown in jail and the rest are exiled to the dusty hinterland for spying. There, the party is ambushed by Yuan soldiers. The survivors are led by General Choi Jung and a bodyguard slave of another fallen general, Yeo-sol. After facing all sorts of adversities, the group make it to a remote country inn where they learn that the beautiful Ming princess Furong (played by Zhang Ziyi of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*
fame) has been kidnapped. When Yeo-sol gets abducted by the same band of Yuan thugs, Choi Jung resolves to free them both. Fleeing from the same Yuan army, the Koryo warriors with Furong in tow learn that the Yuan has burned all ferryboats in the Yellow River valley. When they happen upon a group of Ming refugees, Furong promises them supplies and safe passage home if they escort the refugees to the Mud Castle upriver. The castle, however, proves to be in ruins and the Yuan are closing in."

My Sassy Girl (2001): “A South Korean romantic comedy based on a series of true stories posted by Ho-sik Kim on the Internet describing his relationship with his girlfriend. These were later transformed into a best-selling book and the movie follows the book closely. It describes the meeting of Kyun-woo (Cha) and an unnamed girl. Kyun-woo is shamed into assisting the girl because the other passengers mistakenly think she is his girlfriend. Once he helps her, Kyun-woo develops a deep sense of responsibility for her which enables him to tolerate (somehow) the girls abuses.” Nominated for Best Foreign Film Award at the Japanese Academy (2004) and winner of the Best Asian Film Award at the Hong Kong Film Awards (2003). (An American remake, starring Jesse Bradford and Elisha Cuthbert and directed by Yann Samuell, was released in 2008.)

My Way (2011): “Two rival marathon runners find their dreams of competing in the Tokyo Olympics fading after World War II breaks out and they are forced to serve their country. Jun-shik works on a farm owned by Tatsuo’s grandfather. An aspiring Olympian, Jun-shik dreams of the day he will win the gold as a marathon runner. But Tatsuo also wants to be an Olympic runner, and he's determined to be the best. When the bombs start to fall and both men are drafted into service, Tatsuo becomes the leader of Jun-shik’s unit and hatches an ambitious plan to get the upper hand over their enemies. Unfortunately his plot fails, and both men are taken prisoner by the Soviets. Subsequently escaping but torn apart by fate, Tatsuo and Jun-shik later cross paths on the beaches of Normandy, just as the Allies prepare to execute Operation Overlord.”

Nanking (2007): “Filmmaker Bill Guttentag takes a closer look at the atrocities committed by the Japanese after Nanking fell to the Imperial Japanese Army in 1937 with this documentary that was inspired by Iris Chang's novel The Rape of Nanking. Compiled from over 700 hours of footage including news-reel footage, interviews with survivors and soldiers, and staged readings, Nanking was financed in large by millionaire Ted Leonsis, who had read Chang's obituary and subsequently been prompted to read the author's best-selling account of the massacre.” Nominated for Grand Jury Prize at 2007 Sundance Film Festival.

Oasis (2002): “Korean director Lee Chang-dong’s drama begins on the day that Jong-du (Sol Kyung-gu), a mentally handicapped young man, is released from prison. He is immediately arrested again for being unable to pay a restaurant bill, and his brother bails him out and sets him up with a menial job and a place to live. The crime that originally landed Jong-du in prison was a hit-and-run accident that resulted in the death of an old man. One day he goes to visit the victim’s family, and meets Gong-ju (Moon So-ri), the man’s daughter, who has cerebral palsy. After a disastrous first meeting, the two begin an unlikely love affair that exposes the callousness and uncomfortable secrets of both of their families.”

Once upon a Time in China (2001): “Though generally unknown to Western audiences, Tsui Hark is considered a giant among Asian filmmakers and this exceptional epic, combining hard-hitting martial-arts action with romance, comedy, history, genuine poignance, and sharp insight into the effects of the century-long encroachment of Western civilization in Asia more than amply demonstrates why. The story centers on the exploits of Master Wong Fei-hung (a familiar figure in Hong Kong cinema) a 19th-century doctor, Confucian, and exceptional martial artist. As the film begins, he has just opened a new clinic in Canton Province. To help him with patients, he hires a few apprentices including Porky Lang (the comic relief) and Buck Teeth Sol, who was raised outside China and barely can speak the language. Wong is platonically involved with the lovely, worldly Aunt Yee, who has been abroad most of her life. Wong soon gets in trouble when he begins using his skills to protect and assist the poor and helpless in his community. As a result,
someone torches his clinic, forcing Wong and his compadres to set off and get spectacularly staged revenge. They also try vainly to stop Western culture from changing traditional Chinese ways, but they soon find that they may as well be shoveling sand against a rising tide."
Nominated for eight and winner of four Hong Kong Film Awards, including Best Action Cinematography and Best Director (1992).

**The Painted Veil** (2006): "A couple with a broken relationship learns some valuable lessons about love, life, and sacrifice in this romantic drama based on a novel by W. Somerset Maugham. It’s 1925, and Dr. Walter Fane (Edward Norton) is a physician and bacteriologist who has become smitten with Kitty (Naomi Watts), the beautiful daughter of a wealthy and socially prominent family. Walter proposes marriage to Kitty and she accepts; however, while he clearly loves her, Kitty is more interested in her reputation than Walter's feelings, as she’s recently turned 25, an age by which most of her peers have already wed. Kitty and Walter move to Shanghai, where he sets up a practice and she takes a lover, the British Vice Consul Charles Townsend (Liev Schreiber). When Walter learns of his wife’s infidelity, he becomes furious, and impulsively volunteers to travel to China to work in a village stricken with a major cholera epidemic. While Walter's actions are meant to punish Kitty rather than reflect his own benevolence, the daily trials of living in a community in crisis have a striking impact on the couple, giving them a new and deeper perspective on their relationship." Golden Globe Winner for Best Original Motion Picture Score (2007).

**Poetry** (2010): “A woman in the autumn of her years is prompted by art and circumstance to reexamine her life in this drama from director Lee Chang-dong. Yang Mija (Yun Jung-hee) is a charming and well-preserved woman in her mid-sixties who stays busy looking after her teenage grandson, Wook (Lee David), and helping keep house for an older gentleman friend. Yang Mija has been having trouble with her memory and has developed a new curiosity about creative self-expression, so she signs up for a class in writing poetry at a neighborhood community center, even though she's never written verse before. Mija's simple, contented existence is thrown into disarray by a pair of events -- she learns from her doctor that her memory troubles are the first symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, and Wook is believed to be part of a gang of thugs who severely beat and raped a girl who responded by committing suicide. As Mija faces a grim future, she's uncertain about the notion of turning her grandson in to the police or raising money for a settlement that would keep him out of prison, and suddenly the beauty of the world seems a far more elusive concept. *Shi* (aka *Poetry*) was an official selection and winner of the Best Screenplay Award at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival.”

**The Promise** (2005): "Love and war conspire to create a romantic triangle in this lavish historical epic from director Chen Kaige. A young girl who has lost her parents to the violence of war bravely refuses to obey the orders of a warrior's son, and is approached by a spirit who offers her a life of wealth and power as a reward, but with a catch — she will never know the love of a man unless she learns how to bring the dead back to life by turning back time. Two decades later, the orphaned girl has become Qingcheng (Cecilia Cheung), the adopted daughter of The King (Cheng Qian), and her nation is yet again in the grip of war. During a long and bloody battle, Kunlun (Jang Dong-gun), a slave who has been ordered to fight, proves his skill and bravery in combat, and his commander, General Guangming (Hiroyuki Sanada), rewards him by making him his personal assistant. When Guangming learns that the King is in danger, he and Kunlun set out to rescue him. Kunlun is disguised as Guangming as they prepare to fight the enemy leader Wuhuan (Nicholas Tse), who is out to assassinate the King, but when they arrive, they find that the strong-willed Qingcheng is in greater danger than the potentate as her father and his soldiers struggle to verbally and physically cut her down to size. Kunlun and Guangming impulsively rescue Qingcheng instead of the King, and as they look for a safe haven for the princess, both men fall in love with her, while both the King's forces and Wuhuan are determined to find them. Budgeted at 30 million dollars, *Mo Gik* (aka *The Promise, Master of the Crimson Armor*, and *Wu Ji*) was a major box-office success in China before receiving an international release.” Nominated for Best Foreign Language Film Golden Globe (2006) and five Hong Kong Film Awards.
**Red Cliff** (2008): “Legendary Hong Kong action specialist John Woo and international superstar Tony Leung reunite for their first feature film together since 1992’s *Hard-Boiled* with this historical drama set during the decisive 208 A.D. battle that heralded the end of the Han Dynasty. Adapted in part from the beloved Chinese tome *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Red Cliff* opens in the year 208 A.D., just as prime minister-turned-general Cao Cao (Zhang Fengyi) seeks permission from Han Dynasty emperor Xian (Wang Ning) to organize a southward-bound mission designed to silence troublesome warlords Liu Bei (You Yong) and Sun Quan (Chang Chen). As the expedition gets under way, Cao Cao's troops rain destruction on Liu Bei's army, forcing the latter to retreat and convincing Liu Bei's military strategist Zhuge Liang (Takeshi Kaneshiro) that their only hope for victory is to form an alliance with Sun Quan. Increasingly aware of the monumental struggle ahead, both sides begin preparing for the battle that will ultimately shape the future of an entire nation. Originally envisioned as a single epic, *Red Cliff* was eventually split into two parts due to an excessive running time that approached five hours. *Red Cliff, Part I* and *Red Cliff, Part II* were edited together for theatrical release in the United States as a stand-alone film running nearly two and a half hours.”

**Red Doors** (2005): “The retired patriarch of a New York-based Chinese-American family finds that escaping the insanity of his decidedly dysfunctional clan is more difficult than he anticipated in a thoughtful family drama from writer/director Georgia Lee. There was a time when the Wong's were happy, but time has a strange way of transforming relationships and now all that Ed Wong (Tzi Ma) can see in his family is frustration and rebellion. Though he longs to flee to the calming confines of an upstate Buddhist monastery, Ed is about to find out just how the actions of his three mischievous daughters can throw his outwardly perfect plan for the future into question. As his well-heeled oldest daughter Samantha (Jacqueline Kim) reevaluates her love life and professional career while preparing for an upcoming wedding, middle daughter Julie (Elaine Kao) strives to improve the failing social life that has taken a back seat to her demanding schedule as a medical student, and youngest daughter Katie (Kathy Shao-lin Lee) enters into an increasingly dangerous prank war with longtime neighbor and determined nemesis Simon. Though a look back at the family's old home movies offer Ed a nostalgic glimpse into a happier time when the Wong's were actually able to communicate their feelings to one and other, the dejected father soon discovers that the stories and images from the past may provide new hope for the future as well.”

**Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles** (2005): “On the heels of such extravagant historical swordplay epics as *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers*, Mainland Chinese director Zhang Yimou returns to the reins to tell this intimate tale of an aging father who attempts to remedy a longstanding rift with his grown son. Summoned to Tokyo by his daughter-in-law, Rie (Shinobu Terajima), village fisherman Gou-ichi Takata (Ken Takakura), arrives at a city hospital to find his son, Ken-ichi (Kiichi Nakai), bedridden by liver cancer. Though Gou-ichi attempts to use the visit as a catalyst to heal a decade-long dispute between the pair, stubborn Ken-ichi rejects his father's attempt at reconciliation outright. Subsequently handed a videotape by Rie before departing back to the countryside, Gou-ichi returns home unsuccessful in his efforts to build a bridge of peace between himself and his ailing son. Upon watching the videotape, a research project exploring the Chinese folk arts that was shot by Ken-ichi in the Southern province of Yunnan, Gou-ichi is oddly affected by the onscreen failure of his son in convincing well-known opera singer Li Jiamin (playing himself) to perform the titular song, a classic operatic piece espousing the values of friendship. Now determined to travel to Yunnan and videotape the performance that his son could not, Gou-ichi embarks on a life-changing quest that will not only give him a greater understanding of the relationship between himself and his own son, but set into motion a healing process that will also have a profound impact on the troubled opera singer and the man's long-lost illegitimate son as well.” Nominated for the Golden Rooster Award (China's most prestigious award in film) for Best Cinematography, Best Screenplay, Best Sound, and Best Supporting Actor in 2007; winner of the Best Asian Film Award at the Hong Kong Film Awards in 2007.
The Road Home (2000): Following on the heels of director Zhang Yimou's Not One Less (1999), which won the top prize at the 1999 Venice Film Festival, comes this sensitively-wrought portrait of a young woman's unshakable love. The film opens in the present, shot in gritty black and white, as businessman Luo Yusheng (Sun Honglei) returns to his hometown in the rural Hebei province to attend the funeral of his father. When Luo suggests that the coffin should be brought home from the hospital on a tractor, his aging mother Zhao Di (Zhao Yuelin) rebuffs him, insisting that they conform to custom and have it carried home by local men. Later, as Luo recalls his parent's courtship, the film switches to color and travels back in time about 40 years. A young, beautiful Zhao Di (Zhang Ziyi) finds herself falling for the village's handsome new teacher Luo Changyu (Zheng Hao). As the males in the village join together to build a school for the burg, Zhao Di helps the other women prepare food, waiting patiently to meet the strapping educator. Just as their romance begins, Luo is suddenly ordered to leave by the Communist authorities. As Luo packs up and leaves the village, Zhao Di races hither and thither carrying his favorite steamed dumplings, hoping to catch him before he departs. Though the odds of reunion seem slim, Zhao Di steadfastly holds vigil for her lover until miraculously, Luo returns under the cover of the night only to be once again ordered to the city where he has been commanded to stay. The pair are forced to wait another two years until they can be together. This film won the prestigious Silver Bear at the 2000 Berlin Film Festival and the World Cinema Audience Award at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival; the victories were all the more sweet for the director, as The Road Home was rejected outright from the 1999 Cannes Film Festival, prompting Zhang to angrily withdraw his Not One Less from competition." Winner of the Golden Rooster Award (China's most prestigious award in film) for Best Art Direction, Best Director, and Best Film in 2000.

Seven Swords (2005): “Tsui Hark (The Blade) adapted his massive martial arts epic Seven Swords (AKA Qi Jian) from Liang yu-Sheng's popular novel Seven Swordsmen from Mount Tian. The story opens in the 1660s, following the implementation of China's (Manchu) Qing dynasty. To quell possible nationalist uprisings, the emperor issues a decree forbidding the use of martial arts, and guarantees decapitation for anyone who violates that order. A class of bounty hunters quickly formed to enforce the law and collect 600 pieces of silver for each violator; the most massive and domineering of the warriors is the bald, muscular Fire-Wind (Sun Honglei), a bellicose and volatile creature who lives in an elephantine tent-like dwelling on a hill. This walking terror selects Martial Village, a hamlet in northwestern China, as his next assignment. Meanwhile, in Martial, two young adults, Wu Yuanyin (Charlie Young) and her ex-beau, Han Zhibang) rescue an old executioner, Fu Qingzhu (Lau Kar-leung) who foresees the coming wrath and acknowledges the necessity of pulling in the mythical 'Warriors of Mt. Tian' to fight Fire-Wind and his cronies. The four warriors summoned by Fu include Chu Zhaonan (Donnie Yen), and Yang Yunchong (Leon Lai), who dramatically increase the tension and bloodshed when the former develops a crush on one of Fire-Wind's hostages, Green Pearl (Kim So-yeon) and decides to kidnap her - sending Fire-Wind through the roof. The critically-worshipped Hark reportedly cut two versions of this film (including a 2 1/2 hour cut and a 3-hour cut) and demonstrated incredible confidence in Qi Jian by planning it as the initial installment in a massive series of multimedia sequels, including a 74-part television series, an online video game, comics, and five additional films. The picture itself testifies to this, with the setup for a sophomore installment in its conclusion. Qi Jian, however, did lackluster box office when it opened in the Far East in July 2005, making the follow-ups less than certain."

Shadow Magic (2000): "Chinese-born, American-based director Ann Hu debuts with this epic historical drama about the introduction of motion pictures to China during the beginning of the twentieth century. The film is based on a true story of Liu Jung (Xia Yu), a Peking photographer who struggles to start a film industry in China in spite of the strong anti-Western sentiment of the time. At the film's outset, Liu Jung is scolded by his autocratic boss Master Ren (Liu Peiqi) for his obsession with Western gizmos after he brings home a junked Victrola. During a photo session with China's most famous opera star, Lord Tan (Li Yusheng), Liu Jung runs into Raymond Wallace (Jared Harris), a mysterious Brit who is hell-bent on introducing movies (called "shadow magic") to the Emperor. As soon as Liu Jung sees his first frame, he is hooked on the medium and committed to Wallace's scheme." This film was screened at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival
and was awarded the Golden Horse for Best Adapted Screenplay and Viewer’s Choice Award (2000).

**Shaolin** (2011): “In a young Republic of China, where greedy warlords fuel a period of war and strife, Hou Jie (Andy Lau) arrogantly shows no mercy to his enemies seeking refuge with the benign and compassionate Shaolin monks. After unscrupulously killing a wounded enemy, Hou Jie pays a terrible price for his actions and is forced to seek refuge in the same Shaolin Monastery he blatantly disrespected. Hou Jie’s traitorous second-in-command Cao Man (Nicholas Tse) continues where the once-warlord left off, betraying his country and his own people. Hou Jie must adapt to Shaolin principles to stop the monster he created.”

**Shaolin – The Wheel of Life** (2002): “A jaw-dropping spectacle that is certain to leave viewers breathless in amazement, *Shaolin Wheel of Life* tells an inspiring story of betrayal and redemption against the backdrop of some of the most spectacular martial-arts action ever caught on film. Though the Shaolin monks were nearly destroyed when their loyalty to the Emperor was betrayed, the survival of five young but faithful monks ensures the ‘Wheel of Life’ will continue to turn. Empowered with almost superhuman abilities, twenty monks take the stage to perform a variety of death-defying stunts that must be seen to be believed.”

**Snow Flower and the Secret Fan** (2011): “From the director of *The Joy Luck Club*, and based on the best-selling novel, comes a timeless portrait of female friendship. Centuries ago, two “sworn sisters” are isolated by their families, but stay connected through a secret language written in the folds of a white silk fan. Now in modern-day Shanghai, their descendents must draw inspiration from the past as they struggle to maintain their own eternal bond in the face of life’s complications. What unfolds are two stories, generations apart, but everlasting in their universal notion of love, hope and friendship.”

**Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter … and Spring** (2003): “Korean director Kim Ki-duk’s Buddhism-inspired fable takes place on a placid lake nestled among hills on which floats a small, one-room monastery housing two monks, one old and one young. The action takes place over the course of several years, and is divided into five sections denoted by the seasons of the title. While each section tells a story of its own, the overall plot follows the education of the younger monk, a small boy in the beginning, as he learns lessons over the course of his life from his aging counterpart. Troubled outsiders also visit the monastery seeking guidance, including an ill young woman and a man who murdered his wife. As the title suggests, the film’s ultimate theme is cyclical renewal. Just as the seasons pass through phases of birth and death and rebirth, so do the lives of Kim’s characters.”

**Springtime in a Small Town** (2002): “For his first feature since 1993’s acclaimed *The Blue Kite*, director Tian Zhuangzhuang chose to remake a classic 1949 Chinese film, *Springtime in a Small Town*. The film takes place in 1946. Yuwen (Hu Jingfan) lives on a country estate with her sickly husband, Dai Liyan (Wu Jun), and his rambunctious teenage sister, Dai Xiu (Lu Sisi). They are waited on by the family’s longtime servant, Lao Huang (Ye Xiaokeng). Yuwen cares for her husband and she’s kind to him, but she doesn’t seem to love him. Frustrated with his inability to give her a child due to his constant illness, she sleeps in a separate room. For his part, Liyan feels guilt and shame over his inability to properly care for his wife. Their lives are disrupted by the arrival of Liyan’s childhood friend, Zhang Zhichen (Xin Bajiqi), a well-traveled doctor. Liyan soon learns that his old friend was once his wife’s neighbor, but he doesn’t know that they were also in love, and had at one time planned to marry. Tensions swirl about the household as Yuwen and Zhichen try to reconcile their lingering feelings for each other with their responsibility to Liyan. *Springtime in a Small Town* won the San Marco Prize at the 2002 *Venice Film Festival*, and was selected for the 2002 *New York Film Festival*.”

**A State of Mind** (2003): "While North Korea is slowly growing into a world power, thanks in part to the controversial actions of its leader, Kim Jong II, it is also a nation cut off from the world, keeping little contact with its neighbors China and Russia and separated from South Korea. North Korea is one of the few nations where hard-line adherence to Communist ideals is
still the order of the day, and British filmmaker Daniel Gordon traveled to North Korea to document an unusual annual event, the Mass Games, a massive performance featuring literally thousands of dancers, gymnasts, athletes and musicians staged as a celebration of patriotism and the socialist ideal. Pak Hyon Sun and Kim Song Yon are two girls who were selected to perform in the Mass Games as part of a gymnastics program, and A State of Mind follows them as they prepare for the show, hoping against hope their efforts please Kim Jong Il; along the way, the film offers a perspective on their daily lives and the lives of those around them in a land largely unknown and little understood in the West. Director Daniel Gordon has examined sports and politics in North Korea before with his acclaimed documentary The Game of Their Lives."

The Story of the Weeping Camel (2003): "A nomadic family in Mongolia's Gobi desert faces a problem when a white camel colt is born in a difficult delivery and the mother rejects it. Repeated efforts by the extended family to get the mother to nurse the colt fail. The colt stands alone and cries for its mother. The family worries that the colt will not survive. Finally, Dude (Enkhbulgan Ikhbayar), the older boy, is sent to a nearby town to find a musician who can perform a "Hoos" ceremony. Little Ugna (Uuganbaatar Ikhbayar) begs to go along. The two boys travel for miles across the desert, stopping at a neighbor's yert, where Ugna is delighted by his first encounter with television. They travel on to the village, and then return home with word that a musician is on the way. A musical ceremony is performed in an effort to get the mother camel to accept her colt. The Story of the Weeping Camel is a blend of documentary footage and narrative. Filmmakers Luigi Falorni and Byambasuren Davaa cast a real nomad family of herders and shot many of the events in the film as they occurred." The Story of the Weeping Camel was selected by the Film Society of Lincoln Center and the Museum of Modern Art for inclusion in the 2004 edition of New Directors/New Films. It also won the 2003 European Film Award for Best Documentary.

Tae Guk Gi: The Brotherhood of War (2004): "Korea's leading filmmaker, Kang Je-gyu, directed this epic-scale drama focusing on two brothers caught up in the madness of the war that tore their nation apart in the early '50s. Jin-seok Lee (Weon Bin) is a bright and well-educated young man whose older and more physically imposing brother Jin-tae Lee (Jang Dong-gun) believes he represents the best hope for his family's future. When both Jin-seok and Jin-tae are called up to fight in the South Korean army following the advance of Communist forces, a wary Jin-tae cuts a deal with his commanding officer — if he racks up an impressive enough record on the battlefield, the army will give Jin-seok an early release. Jin-tae proves to be a fearless soldier, and is soon recognized as a war hero, but as the conflict wears on, he develops an unhealthy enthusiasm for the violence of the battlefield, and Jin-seok finds himself questioning his big brother's actions, both as a soldier and as a member of his family. The title Tae Guk Gi: The Brotherhood of War refers to the Korean name for the South Korean flag, originally designed in 1876 but outlawed during Japanese rule of the nation, and restored to use in 1948."

Thirst (2009): "From the acclaimed director of the global hit Old Boy comes a shockingly original vampire story with a chilling, erotic style. A blood transfusion saves the life of a priest, but also transforms him into a vampire. He struggles to control his insatiable thirst for blood until a love affair unleashes his darkest desires in deadly new ways. Hailed as “Daring, operatic, and bloody funny!” (Lisa Schwarzbaum, Entertainment Weekly), Thirst is a truly wicked love story that takes classic vampire lore to twisted new heights."

Three Kingdoms: Resurrection of the Dragon (2008): "This sweeping martial arts epic - a co-production of Hong Kong and Korea - stars Asian screen idol Andy Lau as Zhao, a layman caught up in a rising tide of chaotic violence as his country is ripped in half by the blight of civil war. In desperation, Zhao draws from his inner resources and "rises up" against the evil warlord who has caught the nation under his thumb. The young warrior vows to liberate and unify the land, and leads a sizeable army to accomplish this goal. Unfortunately, while his heroism succeeds in itself, it fails to reunify the nation, but a new and peace-seeking king occupies the throne and appoints Zhao to set out once and for all and bring the warlord toppling down."
Three Times (2005): “Director Hou Hsiao-hsien explores the ever-changing cycle of love in this collection of three romantic stories set in 1911, 1966, and 2005 and utilizing the same actors in all three tales. In ‘A Time for Love,’ a fresh-faced soldier boy named Chen (Chang Chen) searches for a pool hall hostess named May (Shu Qi) who captured his heart before disappearing into the crowd. The second tale, set against the backdrop of the Japanese occupation of Taiwan and entitled ‘A Time for Freedom,’ finds an elegant courtesan tending to a young intellectual in a lavish brothel. The trilogy draws to a close with a segment entitled ‘A Time for Youth’ in which a present-day Taipei singer who is also an epileptic neglects her female lover to seek the romantic attentions of a talented photographer.” Nominated for eleven and winner of three Golden Horse Awards, the most prestigious film award in Taiwan, in 2005, nominated for a Golden Palm at 2005 Cannes Film Festival and nominated for Best Asian Film at the Hong Kong Film Awards in 2006.

Together (2002): “Chen Kaige’s first Chinese film since the poorly received, Hollywood-produced Killing Me Softly is based on a true story of an adolescent violin prodigy coming of age in Beijing. Raised in a small town, Xiao Chun (Tang Yun) is brought to Beijing by his devoted single father, Lui Cheng (Liu Peiqi), who recognizes his talent and is determined to make him a success. After losing a rigged competition for admission into a prestigious music school, Xiao Chun is taken as a student by a brilliant but distracted teacher, Jiang (Wang Zhiwen), and begins to become distracted himself by his twenty-something party-girl neighbor Lili (Chen Hong). He eventually leaves Jiang for more rigorous study under a more famous teacher, Professor Yu (played by director Chen himself), which leaves him torn between his burgeoning career and the loving father who has sacrificed so much for his benefit. Woven throughout the narrative are trenchant comments about the changing face of modern Beijing.” Nominated for Best Asian Film at the 2004 Hong Kong Film Awards.

To Live (1994): “Zhang Yimou, often regarded as China’s leading contemporary filmmaker, directed this drama chronicling the ebb and flow of one family’s fortunes, set against the backdrop of China’s tumultuous history between the 1940s and the 1970s. Fugui (Ge You) is the father of a once-wealthy family whose addiction to gambling and chronic bad luck causes him to lose his home in a game of dice with Long’er (Ni Dabong). Fugui’s wife Jiazhen (Gong Li) abandons him, and he finds himself working as a peddler, until the man who now owns his home gives him a pair of shadow puppets. Fugui learns the art of puppetry and travels as a performer; while on the road, he is arrested by Nationalist forces, until he is liberated by advancing Red Army factions, and he comes home to his wife and children as they adapt to the nation’s new leadership. While once a lazy spendthrift, Fugui vows to change his ways, and he struggles to become a better worker and citizen. But Fugui and his family soon realize that there is adversity waiting for them around every corner, and the onset of the Cultural Revolution makes it clear that China’s new regime can be as corrupt and callous as the old order. While a Grand Prize winner at the 1994 Cannes Film Festival and recipient of the Best Foreign Language Film award at the 1995 BAFTA Awards, Huozhe did not fare well in its homeland. Chinese censors objected to the film’s commentary about political abuses in China’s past, as well as Zhang Yimou’s attempts to present the film at several international festivals. As punishment, he was forced to write a formal apology and was not allowed to make another film for two years.” Also won Best Actor Award at Cannes (1995) and nominated for a Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film (1995).

True Legend (2011): “A well-respected martial arts teacher and a good husband and father, Su Can’s journey begins when his vengeful brother, Yuan, returns from war. Seeking revenge from a dark family history, Yuan, armed with the Five Venom Fist, destroys Su Can’s family and ultimately his dignity. Reduced to a beggar, Su Can finds apprenticeship from Lord Wushu and adapts to a new form of martial arts, the Drunken Fist. At peace with himself, he regains his strength to reclaim his life and returns home to claim retribution and his family honor. Good versus evil, two skilled rivals battle to become the ultimate warrior.”
Unknown Pleasures (2002): “Unknown Pleasures takes place in China, in the small city of Datong, in 2001, where disaffected teenagers look for any kind of excitement to enliven their dreary existence. Bin Bin (Zhao Wei Wei) dates a quiet student, Yuan Yuan (Zhou Qing Feng) who’s thinking of going to university in Beijing. They spend their time together holding hands, watching karaoke and Monkey King videos, and despairing for the future. Bin Bin envies the Monkey King his freedom. Bin Bin has quit his job at a local market, but he doesn't tell his mother (Bai Ru). When she finds out, she wants him to join the army. His less circumspect friend, Xiao Ji (Wu Qiong), stalks a flashy performer, Qiao Qiao (Zhao Tao), who promotes Mongolian King liquor and dates a gangster. The gangster doesn't appreciate Xiao Ji's attentions and slaps him around. Qiao Qiao seems to like him, but as free-spirited as she seems, she's afraid to defy her violent boyfriend. Bin Bin tries selling bootleg DVDs on the street to earn a living. One of his customers, a thug named Xiao Wu (Wang Hong Wei) complains that Bin Bin doesn't carry underground titles like Pickpocket and Platform (writer-director Jia Zhang Ke's previous features), but is pleased to find Pulp Fiction. Inspired by the latter film's opening, Bin Bin and Xiao Ji plot an ill-fated bank robbery.” Nominated for a Golden Palm at the Cannes Film Festival (2002).

War of the Arrows (2011): “A 17th Century Korean archer embarks on a treacherous mission to save his younger sister after she is kidnapped by Manchurian soldiers on her wedding day. The year is 1636. Ja-in (Moon Chae-Won) and her longtime love Seo-Goon are about to exchange their wedding vows as the armies of the Qing Dynasty begin attacking villages, and abducting Koreans. In the midst of the chaos, Ja-in is swept away. As the fighting intensifies, Ja-in's older brother Nam-Yi (The Host's Park Hae-il) realizes that the only way he will ever see his sister alive again is to take on the entire Qing Dynasty. Armed with only his bow and arrow, the brave warrior sets out on a mission to reunite his family, or die trying. A sweeping, historical action epic that proved a massive hit in Korea, War of the Arrows received four trophies at the 2011 Daejong Awards.”

Warriors of Heaven and Earth (2003): “Directed by He Ping, this multi-layered film combines traditional Chinese cinema with the hallmarks of spaghetti Westerns. Set in the eastern portion of the Silk Road, a popular eighth century Asian trade route, the film chronicles the stories of two heroes: Tang Dynasty imperial emissary Lai Xi (Kiichi Nakai) and soldier-turned-mercenary "Butcher" Li (Jiang Wen). After having served the Chinese emperor for some 20 years, Lai is eager to return home, though he must complete a final task before doing so; specifically, tracking down Li, as he once led a mutiny against the emperor's orders. Li, meanwhile, is busy recruiting a caravan to help him escort a Buddhist monk to the capital of China. While Li is successful in finding Li, they agree to postpone their duel-to-the-death until the monk has been safely transported. Of course, after dealing with marauding Turks, the heat of the desert, and local bandits, it becomes unclear whether either man will survive to kill the other.” Winner of Golden Phoenix Award for Best Male Actor (2005) and nominated for Golden Rooster Award for Best Supporting Actor (2004).

Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale (2011): “A man rises up to lead his people in a brave and risky struggle for freedom in this epic-scale historical drama. Mouna Rudo (Ching-tai Lin) was born and raised among the Seediq people, an indigenous tribe in Taiwan, and as he grew to be a man he became a member of the Seediq Bale, a courageous band of native warriors. However, Rudo's way of life is threatened under the yoke of occupying forces from Japan, who took over the nation in 1895. As Rudo sees the traditions and honor of his people stripped away, he realizes the time has come to fight back, and in 1930 he brings together a group of former Seediq Bale soldiers, many of whom have been reduced to infighting, and molds them into a revolutionary army. Rudo and his comrades make their stand when they confront Japanese occupation troops at a youth athletic event, leading to a violent confrontation between the Seediq forces and their oppressors. Written and directed by Wei Te-Sheng, Saideke Balai (aka Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale) was the most expensive film ever produced in Taiwan at the time of its release; it debuted in Taiwan in a two-part, four-hour edition, while a 150-minute cut for international distribution was screened at the 2011 Toronto International Film Festival.” Winner of Golden Horse Film Awards for Best Film, Best Original Film Score, Best Supporting Actor, and
nominated for Golden Horse Film Awards for Best Art Direction, Best Cinematography, Best Director, and Best New Performer (two nominations) (2011).

**What Time is it There?** (2001): “Master Taiwanese filmmaker Tsai Ming-liang directs this look at three people looking for human connection. Hsiao-kang (Tsai regular Lee Kang-sheng) is a young man who sells watches from a briefcase in front of Taipei’s train station. When his father (Mio Tien) suddenly dies at the beginning of the film, it sends Hsiao-kang and his mother, Lu, on two radically different trajectories. His grieving mother becomes obsessed with the return of her dead husband’s spirit. Hsiao-kang starts to urinate into plastic bags and bottles rather than risk bumping into his father’s ghost in the middle of the night. Around that same time, Hsiao-kang encounters an aggressive, though beautiful, lass named Shiang-chyi (Chen Shiang-chyi) who is traveling in a couple of days to Paris. Entranced by the girl, he reluctantly sells her his own watch even though he believes that item has some connection to his father. The encounter leaves with Hsiao-kang with a fixation that Paris is in another time. Soon, he is changing each and every clock he can find back seven hours to Parisian time, forging an obscure connection to Shiang-chyi. Shiang-chyi herself finds Paris to be little different from Taipei in terms of alienation and isolation. Though she has run ins with several people, including an irate Frenchman in the middle of a lover's tiff and none other than Jean-Pierre Leaud in a cemetery, she only finds some comfort when she meets a woman from Hong Kong (Cecila Yip) who generously shares her hotel room with her.” Nominated for a Golden Palm at the 2001 Cannes Film Festival and winner of the Special Jury Award at the Golden Horse Film Festival (2001).

**White Badge** (1994): “This Korean film reflects upon the effects of war upon the soldiers who survive it. The White Badge was given to Korean soldiers who fought in the Vietnam war. The story, begins in 1979 right after President Park's assassination. When Han, a reporter and war veteran, is assigned to write about the Vietnam war he finds himself reliving the dreadful experiences that left him emotionally scarred. His disturbing reverie is also sparked by a phone call from a former member of his platoon, Pyon. Much of the film then focuses upon the ways in which the emotional scars between the two men are manifested.”

**Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?** (1989): “The title refers to a Zen riddle for which there is no answer. Noted painter Bae Yong-kyun spent several years devoted to carefully and lovingly creating this challenging, meditative and exquisitely photographed film. A young man aspires to the priestly life and so travels to a remote mountain hermitage to study under an aged Zen Master whose corporeal days are numbered. The master lives alone there with a small orphan boy. As the days slowly pass, the master occasionally shares his wisdom with his followers. Much time is spent following the boy as he learns about the nature of life in the smallest of ways. Sometimes the older acolyte has brief memories of the past he recently left.”

**A Woman, A Gun, and a Noodle Shop** (2009): “Love, betrayal, and murder take root in the deserts of China in this comedy drama from filmmaker Zhang Yimou. Wang (Ni Dahong) is an ill-tempered tyrant who runs a noodle shop not far from the Great Wall. Wang treats his employees like dirt and isn’t much friendlier to his long-suffering wife (Yan Ni), who soothes her nerves by having an affair with Li (Xiao Shenyang), one of Wang’s cooks. The wife would like to take Wang out of the picture, and one day she gives Li a gun, suggesting that he kill Wang so they can live in peace. A crooked cop named Zhang learns about the plot and tells Wang about the lovers, offering to kill them for a price. The next day, Zhang returns with evidence that Wang’s wife and his cook have been shot, but shoots Wang before he can pay him. Zhang is about to empty out Wang’s safe when he discovers he wasn’t the only one with a plan to double-cross the despised noodle baron. Inspired by Joel and Ethan Coen's *Blood Simple*, *San Qiang Pai An Jing Qi* (aka *A Woman, a Gun and a Noodle Shop*) was an official selection at the 2010 Berlin International Film Festival.

**Yi Yi** (2000): “Master Taiwanese director Edward Yang spins this intricate and complex yarn about life’s everyday crises. The film focuses on N.J. Jian (Wu Nien-Jen, a noted writer/director in his own right); his wife, Min-Min (Elaine Jin); and their two children, teenager Ting-Ting (Kelly
Lee) and young Yang-Yang (Jonathan Chang). Their middle-class existence seems stable and secure until a series of incidents throws all of their lives out of kilter. The misfortunes start at the wedding of Min-Min's ne'er-do-well brother, Ah-Di (Chen Xisheng), when his jilted ex-girlfriend Yun-Yun (Tseng Hsin-yi) bursts into the proceedings and lambastes the bride. Upset by the ruckus and feeling unwell, Min-Min's mother goes home early only to suffer a stroke and slip into a coma. After the wedding, N.J. runs into his first love, Sherry (Ke Suyun), who is married to a rich American. This chance encounter shakes N.J. to his very foundations, forcing him to reevaluate his life. At the same time, N.J.'s computer company deliberates on whether or not to collaborate with a renowned Japanese games designer, Ota (Issey Ogata), sending N.J. to Japan to negotiate a contract. Confronted by her mother's coma, Min-Min also takes stock of her life and finds it lacking. On the brink of a nervous breakdown, she suddenly joins a religious retreat. In Japan, N.J. warms to his potential business partner Ota, spending long evenings discussing life and love in hip Tokyo jazz clubs. There, N.J. also meets up with Sherry; they relive old memories and flirt with infidelity. At the same, Ting-Ting, who quietly blames herself for her grandmother's coma, learns her first hard lessons about love, while Yang-Yang causes trouble at school and wrestles with the truths of the adult world." Winner of the Golden Palm for Best Direction at the 2000 Cannes Film Festival and nominated for Best Foreign Film Award at the 2002 Hong Kong Film Awards.
13 Assassins (2010): “Based on actual events that served as the inspiration for the 1963 film of the same name, Takashi Miike's 13 Assassins follows a group of noble samurai as they seek to slay a tyrannical, politically connected lord before he seizes control of the entire country. Japan, 1844: as the era of the samurai winds to a close, a sadistic young lord uses his powerful political ties to commit heinous atrocities against the common people. Recognizing the dangers to both his country and its citizens should the lord manage to gain any more power, a concerned government official secretly recruits 13 of the most skilled swordsmen he can find to defeat the evil lord once and for all. But reaching their target won't be easy, because the elusive lord is constantly flanked by legions of fearless bodyguards. Realizing that the bodyguards would decimate his modest task force in a traditional battle, the assassins' leader (Koji Yakusho) lays an ingenious trap that will give his men the upper hand, and waits patiently for their prey to take the bait.”

Bashing (2005): “Masahiro Kobayashi draws on true life tragedy to craft this heart wrenching drama about a Japanese aid worker who finds that being kidnapped in war-torn Iraq was only the beginning of her lifelong nightmare. A compassionate woman who longed to make a difference by helping the people of Iraq, Yuko (Fusako Urabe) makes the bold decision to put her own life at risk by heading straight into one of the most dangerous regions on the planet. Yuko's worst fears are later realized when she is kidnapped while providing humanitarian aid everyday Iraqis. Mercifully released by her abductors, Yuko returns to Japan to discover that she has become the victim of a mass public shunning by a population who believes that she has shamed her country in the eyes of the world. As Yuko does her best to resume life as usual, she is continually greeted with great unease by her friends, former co-workers, and loved ones, taunted on the streets by strangers, and endlessly harassed for her perceived transgression against Japanese society at large.”

Battle Royale (2001): “In a future where society is on the verge of collapse, the government takes drastic action against the problem of rebellious teenagers in this violent sci-fi opus from Japan. In the year 2002, Japan's economy has taken a dramatic turn for the worse, and massive unemployment and inflation have thrown most adults into a state of chaos; the nation's youth culture responds with unprecedented violence, delinquency, and truancy. Desperate to restore order, the Japanese parliament responds by creating the Millennial Reform School Act, in which groups of junior high students are selected at random, sent to an isolated island, and forced to play a rigorous war game, in which all but one of their number are killed. Kitano (Beat Takeshi) is an embittered school instructor who guides the 44 students of the Zentsuji Middle School's Class B through the deadly game known as "Battle Royale," as they struggle to survive against the elements and each other. Battle Royale proved to be both successful and highly controversial in Japan, where it set box-office records and prompted political leaders to call for stricter controls on violence in Japanese entertainment; the film was initially rated R-15 (no one under 15 admitted), unusual for violent films in Japan, though director Kinji Fukasaku later prepared a re-edited version that earned a more lenient classification.” Winner for Best Editing, Newcomer of the Year and Popularity Award and nominated for Best Director, Best Film, Best Musical Score, Best Screenplay, and Best Sound at the Awards of the Japanese Academy (2001).

Big Dreams, Little Tokyo (2006): “A burgeoning American businessman struggling to gain a foothold in the ultra-competitive world of Japanese business shares an apartment with an aspiring sumo wrestler whose weight and blood pressure seem to be holding him back from true success in a quirky outsider comedy from director Dave Boyle. Boyd (Boyle) has a natural flair for the
Japanese language, yet despite his versatile language skills, keen business sense, and his best efforts to fit in, he repeatedly finds himself shut out. Likewise, Boyd's Japanese-American roommate, Jerome (Jayson Watabe), seems to be caught in a frustrating cultural vacuum due to the fact that he can't seem to find total acceptance in either Japanese or American social circles. Now, as both men struggle to make inroads to future success, they soon discover that in regards to their professional aspirations in the global community, one's cultural identity is but a minor component in a much larger picture.

**Big Man Japan** (2007): “Director Hitoshi Matsumoto weaves this darkly comic mockumentary about a Japanese giant who continues the long-standing family tradition of facing off against Tokyo's most formidable monsters. Constantly caught in the middle of everyone's battles, Daisato finds his sincere efforts to keep the peace repeatedly belittled; he's divorced, his neighbors have covered his house in graffiti, and he gets nothing but dirty looks when he walks down the street. When we first meet Daisato, he is the subject of a television documentary. Though on the surface Daisato may seem like your average, slightly unkempt salaryman -- completely unremarkable in all respects -- it soon becomes apparent just how deceiving first impressions can be. After lamenting on camera the fact that he never gets any vacation time due to frequent calls from the Defense Department, the camera follows Daisato as he rides his motorbike to a Tokyo power plant, receives the jolt of electricity that transforms him into a hulking superhuman crime fighter, and clashes with a gargantuan leviathan intent on destroying Tokyo. Daisato comes from a long line of heroic heavyweights, yet while his ancestors were once championed with parades for their noble efforts, public interest in giant invaders has waned and Daisato has become something of a joke to the citizens of Tokyo. Not only is the noise generated by Daisato's battles regarded as a public nuisance, the property damage that he causes while defending the city has the citizens downright angry. Now, as Daisato attempts to balance his responsibilities to his ex-wife, his daughter, his agent, and his senile grandfather, the crushing weight of both his personal and professional obligations simply becomes too much to bear.”

**The Blind Swordsman: Zatoichi** (2003): “Beat Takeshi Kitano directs and plays the title role in this tribute to the wildly popular "blind swordsman" of Japanese cinema who was the hero of more than twenty movies and a television series from the early '60s to the late '80s. In Kitano's version, Zatôichi wanders into a town harassed by criminal gangs, and helps two geishas take revenge on the men who murdered their parents. His mission leads him to a final, bloody confrontation with the gang's mastermind and his hired assassin (Tadanobu Asano), a swordsman with a reputation as lethal as Zatôichi." Winner for Best Cinematography, Best Editing, Best Lighting, and Best Sound and nominated for Best Art Direction, Best Film, Best Supporting Actor, and Best Supporting Actress at the Awards of the Japanese Academy (2004).

**The Bridge on the River Kwai** (1957): “The film opens in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp in Burma in 1943, where a battle of wills rages between camp commander Colonel Saito (Sessue Hayakawa) and newly arrived British colonel Nicholson (Alec Guinness). Saito insists that Nicholson order his men to build a bridge over the river Kwai, which will be used to transport Japanese munitions. Nicholson refuses, despite all the various "persuasive" devices at Saito's disposal. Finally, Nicholson agrees, not so much to cooperate with his captor as to provide a morale-boosting project for the military engineers under his command. The colonel will prove that, by building a better bridge than Saito's men could build, the British soldier is a superior being even when under the thumb of the enemy. As the bridge goes up, Nicholson becomes obsessed with completing it to perfection, eventually losing sight of the fact that it will benefit the Japanese. Meanwhile, American POW Shears (William Holden), having escaped from the camp, agrees to save himself from a court martial by leading a group of British soldiers back to the camp to destroy Nicholson's bridge. Upon his return, Shears realizes that Nicholson's mania to complete his project has driven him mad. Filmed in Ceylon, Bridge on the River Kwai won seven Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director for the legendary British filmmaker David Lean, and Best Actor for Guinness. It also won Best Screenplay for Pierre Boulle, the author of the novel on which the film was based, even though the actual writers were blacklisted writers Carl Foreman and Michael Wilson, who were given their Oscars under the table.”
**Departures** (2008): "Director Yojiro Takita and writer Kundo Koyama examine the rituals surrounding death in Japan with this tale of an out-of-work cellist who accepts a job as a "Nokanashi" or "encoffineer" (the Japanese equivalent of an undertaker) in order to provide for himself and his young wife. Daigo Kobayashi (Masahiro Motoki) is a talented musician, but when his orchestra is abruptly disbanded, he suddenly finds himself without a source of steady income. Making the decision to move back to his small hometown, Daigo answers a classified ad for a company called "Departures," mistakenly assuming that he will be working for a travel agency. Upon discovering that he will actually be preparing the bodies of the recently deceased for their trip to the afterlife, Daigo accepts the position as gatekeeper between life and death and gradually gains a greater appreciation for life. But while Daigo's wife and friends universally despise his new line of work, he takes a great amount of pride in the fact that he is helping to ensure that the dead receive a proper send-off from this state of being."

**Empire of the Sun** (1987): "Based on J.G. Ballard's autobiographical novel, Empire of the Sun stars Christian Bale as a spoiled young British boy, living with his wealthy family in pre-World War II Shanghai. During the Japanese invasion, Bale is separated from his parents. With the help of soldier-of-fortune John Malkovich, Bale learns to survive without a retinue of servants at his beck and call. By the time Malkovich and Bale are tossed into a Japanese prison camp, the boy has picked up enough street-smarts and developed enough intestinal fortitude to regard his imprisonment as an exciting adventure. The story ends during the 1945 liberation: on the verge of manhood, the 13-year-old Bale will never again be the pampered, privileged brat whom we met in the early scenes." Nominated for six Academy Awards, two Golden Globes and a Grammy (1988).

**Fires on the Plain** (1959): "An agonizing portrait of desperate Japanese soldiers stranded in a strange land during World War II and the lengths they go to survive, Kon Ichikawa's Fires on the Plain is a compelling descent into psychological and physical oblivion. Denied hospital treatment for tuberculosis and cast off into the unknown, Private Tamura treks across an unfamiliar Filipino landscape, encountering an increasingly debased cross-section of Imperial Army soldiers. Grisly yet poetic, Fires on the Plain is one of the most powerful works from one of Japanese cinema's most versatile filmmakers."

**Fall Guy** (1982): "Internationally acclaimed director Kinji Fukasaku's Fall Guy is a moving love story and a heartfelt valentine to the movies. Morio Kazama stars as Ginshiro, a vain and selfish actor whose stardom is threatened by rising star Tachibana (Daijiro Harada). In a desperate bid to burnish his image, Ginshiro compels a devoted member of his entourage, Yasu (Mitsuro Hirata), to marry Ginshiro's pregnant mistress, Konatsu (Keiko Matsuzaka). To support his new wife, the devoted Yasu becomes a stunt man, performing increasingly dangerous stunts. Konatsu is torn between Yasu and Ginshiro, who compels his loyal disciple to perform a death-defying stunt that could save the film and Ginshiro's career." Winner of eight awards from the Japanese Academy, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Film Score, Best Screenplay, Best Supporting Actor, and "Newcomer of the Year" and nominated for four others (1983).

**Grave of the Fireflies** (1988): "The film opens on an evening in 1945, after Japan's surrender at the end of World War II; and in a train station, the young Seita dies alone. The rest of the movie tells us, in flashback, how things have come to this. Seita and Setsuko are two young Japanese children growing up in the waning days of World War II. Much to Seita's pride, their father is in the Japanese navy, and they live fairly content lives in Kobe despite rationing and the other privations of war. When their mother dies from burns suffered during an American fire-bombing raid, a distant aunt takes them in -- and conflict eventually forces the children to try to survive on their own. At first, Seita and his little sister enjoy their idyllic lives in the country, but harsh reality eventually settles in as Seita begins to understand the difficulties of taking care of a young child when both food and compassion are scarce."
**Hana (2007):** "Director Hirokazu Koreeda turns the popularly held conventions of the typical samurai revenge tale on their head with this story of a man whose quest to avenge the death of his father gradually takes a back seat to his emerging role as a key figure in the community. The year is 1702, and young samurai Sozaemon Aoki (Junichi Okada) has arrived in Edo to seek revenge against Jubei Kanazawa (Tadanobu Asano). Kanazawa is the man responsible for the death of Aoki's father, and now it's up to the grieving swordsman to settle the score. When Aoki begins teaching the children of Edo to read and write, however, his bloodlust slowly begins to subside as he comes to realize the true value of his useful place in society. Upon falling in love with the beautiful Osae (Rie Miyazawa), Aoki comes to realize that although the sword may be a powerful symbol of strength, allowing oneself to fall victim to its savage allure may not always be the best way to realizing ones true heroism."

**Hara-kiri: Death of a Samurai (2011):** "Japanese auteur Takashi Miike takes an uncharacteristically serious and somber approach to this moody period tale of honor and revenge. In the 17th century, Japan is enjoying an era of calm and tranquility, which is good news for most people but bad news for the samurai, the class of professional soldiers who now find themselves without jobs or a sense of purpose. Hanshiro (Ebizo Ichikawa) is a samurai who, with no money and no prospects, has arrived at the House of Ii, hoping to use its courtyard as a setting for the suicide ritual known as hara-kiri. However, the ruler of the House if Ii, Kageyu (Koji Yakusho), has been hearing similar requests often as of late, and he knows most of them are emotional blackmail, attempts to persuade the members of the house to give the samurai money. To show what he thinks of such shameless appeals, Kageyu tells Hanshiro the story of one such warrior, Motome (Eita), who had his bluff called and was forced to take his own life with a dull weapon made of bamboo. But Kageyu is unaware of the connection between Hanshiro and Motome, and he underestimates the impact this story will have on Hanshiro. Adapted from Masaki Kobayashi's celebrated 1962 feature Harakiri, Hara-Kiri: Death of a Samurai (aka Ichimei) was also one of the first 3-D features to debut at the Cannes Film Festival."

**Heaven and Earth (1990):** "Haruki Kadokawa takes a turn at the director's chair with this sprawling historical epic featuring a massive budget: a record-breaking five billion yen, and thousands of extras comprising most of the student population from the University of Calgary. Set during the Warring States era (1482-1558), the film opens on the real-life rivalry between feuding warlords Takeda Shingen and Uesugi Kenshin. The latter (Takaaki Enoki) begins the film as Nagao Kagetora, the younger brother of the lord of Echigo Province. Encouraged by court retainer Usami Tadayuki (Tsunehiko Watase), he challenges his inept brother for the reigns of power and kills him in an ensuing duel. Soon after becoming lord of the province, he faces a new threat with Takeda Harunobu (Masahiko Tsugawa), lord of the neighboring Kai province. Both have grand dreams of uniting their war-torn land and ruling from the imperial capital of Kyoto. Ultimately, this clash of egos, personalities, and ambitions leads to the cataclysmic 1561 battle of Kawanakajima." Nominated for six Awards of the Japanese Academy (1991).

**The Hidden Blade (2004):** "The Hidden Blade concerns Yaichiro, a warrior who must leave his family in the care of two other samurai after he answers a request for his services in another town. Muenezo and Samon do their best to protect the family when they come under attack during Yaichiro's absence." Nominated for twelve Awards of the Japanese Academy and winner of Best Art Direction (2005).

**Hiroshima (1995):** "This Canadian-Japanese co-production uses both vintage historical footage (including armed forces films and period newsreels) and contemporary dramatic reenactments to tell the story of how the scientific and military minds behind the Manhattan Project, under the orders of President Harry Truman developed the first atomic bomb. The weapon was first used to attack the city of Hiroshima near the end of World War II, changing forever the shape of modern warfare and bringing fearsome devastation to a previously quiet Japanese city."
**Hula Girls** (2006): "As the Korean War draws to a close and the pressing demand for copious amounts of coal takes a sudden plunge, the remote Japanese mining town of Joban attempts to compensate for the devastating economic blow by transforming itself into a lavish Hawaiian retreat in an affectionate comedy inspired by real events and directed by Lee Sang-il. The year is 1965 and the changes that have swept through the outside world are finally reaching Joban. As the mineworkers are laid off and the women of the town take it upon themselves to gently nudge their once-prosperous community from the brink of economic collapse, the ancient Hawaiian art of the hula dance seems to offer the ideal means of doing so. Though highly fashionable Tokyo urbanite Madoka Hirayama (Yasuko Matsuyuki) at first seems terribly out of place when she arrives in Joban to teach local ladies how to saw their hips with authentic grace, her noble efforts soon instill her students with a newfound sense of confidence in both themselves, and their struggling community." Winner of Best Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Supporting Actress, and Most Popular Film Awards and nominated for seven others at the Awards of the Japanese Academy (2007).

**Ikiru** (1952): “Akira Kurosawa's *Ikiru* details the existential struggle of one ordinary man in his desperate search for purpose. Upon learning he has terminal stomach cancer, a low-level government bureaucrat (Takashi Shimura) leaves his job of thirty years without a word to find meaning in the year he has left to live. He is completely alone in the world — his wife is dead, his son is practically estranged, and his co-workers (the people with whom he has more contact than any others) are little more than strangers. Rather than face a death alone in pathos, Shimura opts to make up for lost time by going to the bar (for the first time in his life), spending every last yen in his wallet and drinking himself to death. There he meets a black-clad artist (a Mephistopheles to his Faust) who leads him on a hellish (and darkly humorous) tour of the city after dark as the two crawl through every booze-soaked juke-joint in town (Kurosawa's classical training as a painter surfaces in this sequence; many critics have noted the striking similarity of the crowded dance hall scenes to the paintings of Hieronymous Bosch, (particularly *Walpurgis Night*). Realizing he has missed nothing, Shimura then sets his sight on a pretty young girl from the office to divert his attention from his looming mortality. Although the girl fails to serve as a lifebuoy, she does give him the inspiration to do something meaningful — to leave a legacy, however small, that makes the world a better place. A synopsis of *Ikiru* cannot serve the film justice; it simply must be seen."

**Jiro Dreams of Sushi** (2011): “Jiro Ono is one of the most-respected and acclaimed sushi chefs in Japan. At the age of 85, he operates an exclusive sushi restaurant, Sukiyabashi Jiro, with a long waiting list for reservations (the restaurant has a mere ten tables and a typical meal costs $300) and a prized three-star rating from the Michelin restaurant guide. Perfecting the art of sushi has been one of Ono's obsessions since he was a young man, and filmmaker David Gelb offers a delicious look into his life and work in the documentary *Jiro Dreams of Sushi*. In the film, Ono discusses his unhappy childhood, his early days in the restaurant game, and his techniques and philosophies about his chosen dish; he also interacts with fish dealers and his two sons, both gifted chefs who live and work in their father's shadow. *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* was an official selection at the 2011 Tribeca Film Festival.”

**Kamui Gaiden** (2009): “A ninja walks away from his life as a warrior only to find he must embrace it again late in life in this action drama based on a popular manga by Sampei Shirato. As a young man, Kamui (Kenichi Matsuyama) was strong, agile and had the talent to become a great ninja fighter. However, as he learned the way of the warrior, he encountered too many ninjas who used their abilities for vicious or self-serving reasons, and in disgust he walked away from his training, spending fourteen years as a recluse wandering in the mountains. When Kamui makes his way to the seashore, he meets Hanbei (Kaoru Kobayashi), a fisherman who shares the former ninja's sense of honor and propriety. Though Hanbei's wife Oshika (Koyuki) is wary of the stranger, the fisherman and Kamui become fast friends, but Kamui doesn't enjoy the peace of the seaside for very long. A band of ninjas turned pirates invade Hanbei's village, and Kamui must reacquaint himself with his warrior training to defend his friend and new neighbors from the violent horde; Kamui also must protect Hanbei's daughter (Suzuka Ohgo), with whom
he's fallen in love. Directed by Yoichi Sai, Kamui Gaiden (aka Kamui) received its North American premiere at the 2009 Toronto International Film Festival."

**Kikujiro** (1999): “Kikujiro is a bittersweet road movie about two characters who have very little in common. Masao (Yusuke Sekiguchi) is a sensitive nine-year-old boy who has to spend his summer vacation alone with his grandmother. Soccer practice is suspended and all his friends are away at the beach. In his boredom, he decides to look for the mother he has never met; with only a photo, an address, and very little money, this does not seem like a good idea. A friend of his grandmother's volunteers to send her husband along. The problem is that the irresponsible, loudmouthed, and greedy Kikujiro (Kitano), a low-level yakuza, is hardly the ideal companion for a child. He does not even like children. Starting with the excursion to the cycle races, this mismatched couple goes through a fanciful journey full of oddball characters and pleasant surprises. The best surprise of all is to discover how much they have in common. By the end of the journey, sullen Masao gains the sense of magic that had been missing from his life. As for Kikujiro, he now has a better understanding of who he is and what has been wrong with his life, although it takes a child to make him realize this. Kitano has declared that his own father, who passed away when he was a little boy, was the inspiration for the character of Kikujiro. The man was a house painter, carpenter, and master of traditional Japanese dance, but also a gambler who let his family down on many occasions.” Winner of Best Music Score and Best Supporting Actress and nominated for Best Film Award of the Japanese Academy (2000) and nominated for the Palm d’Or at Cannes (1999).

**The Last Samurai** (2003): “Edward Zwick returned to the director's chair for the first time since 1998's The Siege with this sweeping period drama set in 19th-century Japan. After centuries of relying on hired samurai for national defense, the Japanese monarchy has decided to do away with the warriors in favor of a more contemporary military. Tom Cruise stars as Nathan Algren, a veteran of the U.S. Civil War who is hired by the Emperor Meiji to train an army capable of wiping out the samurai. But when Algren is captured by the samurai and taught about their history and way of life, he finds himself conflicted over who he should be fighting alongside. Billy Connelly, Tony Goldwyn, and Ken Watanabe co-star.” Nominated for four Academy Awards and three Golden Globes (2004); awarded Best Foreign Film by the Japanese Academy (2005).

**Late Spring** (1949) " Veteran Japanese writer/director Yasujiro Ozu's second postwar production was 1949's Late Spring (or Banshun). This is a calm, meditative drama about the dynamics of a middle-class family, in this case the inevitable separation of 56-year-old father and widower Shukichi (Chishu Ryu) and his adult daughter Noriko (Setsuko Hara). Noriko is content to care for her father and remain unmarried, despite the urging of friends and relatives to find a suitable husband. Not wishing to see the girl resign herself to spinsterhood, Ryu pretends that he himself is about to be married. The game plan is to convince the daughter that they'll be no room for her at home, thus forcing her to seek comfort and joy elsewhere. There are some viable candidates and several attempts at matchmaking, but the likeliest match is a man who's already engaged. Noriko simply wishes for things to remain as they are, but she does eventually marry a handsome chemist who 'looks like Gary Cooper.' Late Spring serves a secondary function as a light and lively portrait of post-war Japan, as hints of Western influence (like a Coca-Cola sign in one of the film's most memorable scenes) that signal Japan's transition toward a modern commercial economy. Most of all, however, Late Spring is a carefully observed and quietly heartbreaking story of a parent who yearns to set things right for his daughter who must balance her father's love with her own prospects for a fulfilling future. Late Spring represents a milestone that would ensure Ozu his rightful place among the greatest of all Japanese directors."

**Letters from Iwo Jima** (2006): “After bringing the story of the American soldiers who fought in the battle of Iwo Jima to the screen in his film Flags of Our Fathers, Clint Eastwood offers an equally thoughtful portrait of the Japanese forces who held the island for 36 days in this military drama. In 1945, World War II was in its last stages, and U.S. forces were planning to take on the Japanese on a small island known as Iwo Jima. While the island was mostly rock and volcanoes, it was of key strategic value and Japan's leaders saw the island as the final opportunity to prevent an Allied invasion. Lt. General Tadamichi Kuribayashi (Ken Watanabe)
was put in charge of the forces on Iwo Jima; Kuribayashi had spent time in the United States and was not eager to take on the American army, but he also understood his opponents in a way his superiors did not, and devised an unusual strategy of digging tunnels and deep foxholes that allowed his troops a tactical advantage over the invading soldiers. While Kuribayashi's strategy alienated some older officers, it impressed Baron Nishi (Tsuyoshi Ihara), the son of a wealthy family who had also studied America firsthand as an athlete at the 1932 Olympics. As Kuribayashi and his men dig in for a battle they are not certain they can win — and most have been told they will not survive — their story is told both by watching their actions and through the letters they write home to their loved ones, letters that in many cases would not be delivered until long after they were dead. Among the soldiers manning Japan's last line of defense are Saigo (Kazunari Ninomiya), a baker sent to Iwo Jima only days before his wife was to give birth; Shimizu (Ryo Kase), who was sent to Iwo Jima after washing out in the military police; and Lieutenant Ito (Shidou Nakamura), who has embraced the notion of "Death Before Surrender" with particular ferocity. Filmed in Japanese with a primarily Japanese cast, *Letters From Iwo Jima* was shot in tandem with *Flags of Our Fathers*, and the two films were released within two months of one another." Nominated for four Oscars (2007) including Best Picture and Best Director; won an Oscar for Best Sound Editing. Won Best Foreign Language Film at the Japanese Academy Awards (2007). Nominated for Best Director Golden Globe and winner of Best Foreign Language Picture Golden Globe (2007).

*Lost In Translation* (2003): "After making a striking directorial debut with her screen adaptation of *The Virgin Suicides*, Sofia Coppola offers a story of love and friendship blooming under unlikely circumstances in this comedy drama. Bob Harris (Bill Murray) is a well-known American actor whose career has gone into a tailspin; needing work, he takes a very large fee to appear in a commercial for Japanese whiskey to be shot in Tokyo. Feeling no small degree of culture shock in Japan, Bob spends most of his non-working hours at his hotel, where he meets Charlotte (Scarlett Johansson) at the bar. Twenty-something Charlotte is married to John (Giovanni Ribisi), a successful photographer who is in Tokyo on an assignment, leaving her to while away her time while he works. Beyond their shared bemusement and confusion with the sights and sounds of contemporary Tokyo, Bob and Charlotte share a similar dissatisfaction with their lives; the spark has gone out of Bob's marriage, and he's become disillusioned with his career. Meanwhile, Charlotte is puzzled with how much John has changed in their two years of marriage, while she's been unable to launch a creative career of her own. Bob and Charlotte become fast friends, and as they explore Tokyo, they begin to wonder if their sudden friendship might be growing into something more.” Nominated for three Academy Awards and winner of Best Original Screenplay Oscar; nominated for five Golden Globes and winner of three (Best Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy, Best Actor, and Best Screenplay) (2003).

*Memoirs of a Geisha* (2005): "This film, based on the novel by Arthur Golden, unfolds from the perspective of Chiyo (Zhang Ziyi), a girl who, at the age of nine, is sold to a geisha house in Kyoto in the early 1930s. Here, she learns that becoming a geisha can be the single path to wealth and independence for a woman. The head geisha of her house, however, Hatsumomo (Gong Li), is bitterly jealous of Chiyo and abuses her at every opportunity. Eventually Chiyo is taken under the wing of Hatsumomo’s rival, Mameha (Michelle Yeoh), by far the most famous and successful geisha in their district. Under Mameha’s tutelage, Chiyo becomes Sayuri, the most legendary geisha in the nation, skilled in all areas, from conversation to dance, and sought after by seemingly every man alive...except for the one whom she has secretly longed for since she began her training, The Chairman (Ken Watanabe) — a man who showed her kindness at a time when her view of the world had turned the most bleak. Now as World War II approaches, Japan stands at the brink of a new era and Sayuri must confront the possibility that history will leave all that she has worked for behind.” Nominated for six Academy Awards (2006) and won three (Art Direction, Cinematography and Costume Design). Also nominated for two Golden Globes and a Grammy; won a Golden Globe and a Grammy for Best Score.

*Millennium Actress* (2001): "Following up on his highly acclaimed animated psychological thriller *Perfect Blue*, Satoshi Kon spins this mystery about a documentary filmmaker and a legendary actress. In honor of Gin Ei studio’s 70th anniversary, a small production house run by
Genya Tachibana is selected to make a commemorative documentary. Genya decides to focus his film on actress Chiyoko Fujiwara, a massive star who at the height of her popularity retreated from public life. Accompanied an eager young cameraman, Genya doggedly tracks her down to discover her living a hermit-like life of charmed isolation. He also learns that in spite of her advanced age, she has lost little of her famed charm or elegance. As he interviews her, Genya learns of Chiyoko's troubled past and eventually the reasons for her sudden retirement. A Grand Prize Winner for Animation (2001 Japan Agency of Cultural Affairs Media Arts Festival) along with Spirited Away.

Nobody Knows (2004): "Hirokazu Kore-eda, who wrote and directed the international success After Life, returns with this story about a family dealing with an unusual dilemma in an unusual manner. Keiko (You) is a single mother who moves with her 12-year-old son, Akira (Yuya Yagira), into a small flat in a large city; however, what the building management doesn't know is that Keiko also has three other children, all fathered by different men: ten-year-old Kyoko (Ayu Kitaura), seven-year-old Shigeru (Hiei Kimura), and four-year-old Yuki (Momoko Shimizu). One day, Akira finds a note from his mother, saying that she'll be away for a while and that he's in charge while she's gone; the message is accompanied by an envelope full of money. Akira takes this news in stride, since it isn't the first time this has happened; he sees to it that the bills are paid, Kyoko takes care of the housework, and the youngest kids look after one another. But days stretch into weeks and it becomes clear that Kieko may not be coming back for a while. At first, the children try to keep up appearances as if their mother were still around, but as time goes on and money gets low, things become increasingly chaotic, and Keiko starts running out of ways to dodge the landlord and keep their problem a secret. Daremo Shiranai was inspired by actual events known in Japan as The Affair of the Four Abandoned Children of Nishi-Sugamo, though Kore-eda's version differs considerably from what occurred in real life. Nominated for Golden Palm and winner of Best Actor at 2004 Cannes Film Festival and nominated for Best Supporting Actress at 2004 Japanese Academy Awards.

Princess Mononoke (1997): "This $20 million animated adventure/fantasy quickly became the highest grossing Japanese film in Japanese film history (making $150 million in Japan during its first seven months). Set in the 14th century, the ecology-themed epic was directed by Hayao Miyazaki whose previous films were acquired by Disney for U.S. distribution plus other territories. Princess Mononoke depicts a mystical battle between Animal Gods of the forest and humans during Japan's Muromachi Period. Young Ashitaka receives a fatal infection after a demonic wild boar attacks his northern village. Seeking a cure, he sets out to locate the deer-like god Shishigami. Along the way, he sees the rape of the Earth by a mining village. The constant plundering by the village has brought the wrath of the Wolf God, Moro, who attacks the village along with San, a human who was raised by the wolf god. She communicates with the nature spirits — which is why she is called Princess Mononoke ("spirits of things"). Ashitaka wants these opposing forces to co-exist, and he hopes to bring peace between San and the ironworks owner, Lady Eboshi. However, he is thwarted as higher powers, intent on killing the Shishigama, intrude, and a battle erupts over the future of all nature. Winner of the Best Film Award in the Japanese Academy Awards (1998).

The Ramen Girl (2008): "Abandoned by her boyfriend after following him to Tokyo, an American slacker adrift in a foreign culture witnesses the healing power of food and determines to become a ramen chef. When Abby (Brittany Murphy) arrived in Tokyo, she assumed she was starting a new life with her boyfriend. But that future fades when Abby's boyfriend disappears, leaving her to fend for herself in a city she doesn't understand. In desperate need of a little consolation, the floundering American begins frequenting her neighborhood ramen shop. She feels comfortable there, and recognizes how happy food can make people by the radiant smiles on the customer's faces. Convinced that her true calling is to become a ramen chef, Abby eventually persuades the restaurant's temperamental, tyrannical Japanese chef to become her mentor in the art of making ramen. Though at first their relationship is almost unbearably contentious, the master and his student eventually find a common ground when Abby realizes that the secret ingredient to true ramen is a universe of feeling."
**Rashomon** (1951): “This landmark film by Akira Kurosawa is a brilliant exploration of truth and human weakness. It opens with a priest, a woodcutter, and a peasant taking refuge from a downpour beneath a ruined gate in 12th-century Japan. The priest and the woodcutter, each looking stricken, discuss the trial of a notorious bandit for rape and murder. As the retelling of the trial unfolds, the participants in the crime — the bandit (Toshiro Mifune), the rape victim (Machiko Kyo), and the murdered man (Masayuki Mori) — tell their plausible though completely incompatible versions of the story. In the bandit's version, he and the man wage a spirited duel after the rape, resulting in the man's death. In the woman's testimony, she is spurned by her husband after being raped. Hysterical with grief, she kills him. In the man's version, speaking through the lips of a medium, the bandit beseeches the woman after the rape to go away with him. She insists that the bandit kill her husband first, which angers the bandit. He spurns her and leaves. The man kills himself. Seized with guilt, the woodcutter admits to the shocked priest and the commoner that he too witnessed the crime. His version is equally feasible, although his veracity is questioned when it is revealed that he stole a dagger from the crime scene. Just as all seems bleak and hopeless, a baby appears behind the gate. The commoner seizes the moment and steals the child's clothes, while the woodcutter redeems himself and humanity in the eyes of the troubled priest, by adopting the infant.” Nominated for an Academy Award for Best Art Direction (1952) and given an Honorary Award by the Academy's Board of Governors for the most outstanding foreign language film released in the United States (1951).

**Rhapsody in August** (1991): "Master filmmaker Akira Kurosawa follows up on his phantasmagoric *Dreams* with this delicate tale about war and memory. The film centers on Kane (Sachiko Murase) a grandmother who lives on her traditional farm in the hills near Nagasaki. Her husband and a number of siblings died in the 1945 atomic bombing of the city and memories of that event are never far from her mind. She learns that her elder brother, who went to Hawaii to seek his fortune in pineapples, is on his deathbed and would very much like to see his sister one last time. Her half-American nephew Clark (played by Richard Gere) is venturing to Nagasaki to escort her to Hawaii. Though the prospect of meeting a real live American excites Kane's four grandchildren who are staying with her for the summer and who often sport American college T-shirts, Kane remains ambivalent both about the prospects of going to the States, and about the dark memories Clark's presence dredges up." Ten nominations for Awards by the Japanese Academy and winner of four, including Best Cinematography (1992).

**Ronin-Gai** (1990): “Kazuo Kuroki's international award-winning period drama was produced in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the death of Shozo Makino, 'the father of Japanese films'. Set in the 1830s near the end of the age of the samurai, *Ronin Gai* is populated by an ensemble of colorful characters, social outcasts who patronize a restaurant and brothel on the outskirts of Edo. Among them are prostitutes and masterless samurai reduced to drunkenness and debauchery. The disgraced and disillusioned former warriors get a chance at redemption when renegade samurai invade the area to murder the prostitutes.” Nominated for five and Winner of Best Supporting Actor at the Japanese Academy Awards (1991).

**Sanjuro** (1962): “Set in the mid-19th century when the disintegration of a rigid social structure was turning the once wealthy into paupers, or vice-versa, this kinetic drama by acclaimed Akira Kurosawa features the hero Sanjuro (Toshiro Mifune), one of many samurai whose once traditional positions were fast disappearing. In this tale of false perceptions and truth, of honor and dishonor, Sanjuro is a character who captures and holds attention from the moment he appears on screen. When he arrives in a small city, he discovers that a band of nine men are anxious to overthrow the corrupt ruling elite. Physically strong and agile, mentally sharp and clear-headed, Sanjuro still has an deep commitment to justice and honor underneath his dirty, abrasive, and cynical exterior. The nine men may doubt his nobility, but that is because they are only looking skin deep. While the sword fighting and action scenes are memorable, it is Toshiro Mifune's characterization and Kurosawa's camera eye that enhance the story.”

**The Sea is Watching** (2002): "Kei Kumai's *Umi Wa Miteita* (The Sea Watches) has a script written by the late Japanese master Akira Kurosawa. O-Shin (Nagiko Tohno) is a geisha. One day a samurai named Fusanosuke (Hidetaka Yoshioka) appears in her town on the run after
having killed a man. She assists him by cutting his hair. The two fall in love, despite the protestations from O-Shin's friend Kikuno (Misa Shimizu). Eventually Fusanosuke leaves, only to return one day and reveal that he is engaged. The second half of the film involves O-Shin again falling in love with a samurai, this one named Ryosuke (Masatoshi Nagase).

**Seven Samurai** (1954): "Akira Kurosawa's epic tale concerns honor and duty during a time when the old traditional order is breaking down. The film opens with master samurai Kambei (Takashi Shimura) posing as a monk to save a kidnapped farmer's child. Impressed by his selflessness and bravery, a group of farmers begs him to defend their terrorized village from bandits. Kambei agrees, although there is no material gain or honor to be had in the endeavor. Soon he attracts a pair of followers: a young samurai named Katsushiro (Isao Kimura), who quickly becomes Kambei's disciple, and boisterous Kikuchiyo (Toshiro Mifune), who poses as a samurai but is later revealed to be the son of a farmer. Kambei assembles four other samurais, including Kyuzo (Seiji Miyaguchi), a master swordsman, to round out the group. Together they consolidate the village's defenses and shape the villagers into a militia, while the bandits loom menacingly nearby. Soon raids and counter-raids build to a final bloody heart-wrenching battle." Nominated for Academy Awards for Best Art Direction and Best Costume Design (1957).

**Shall We Dance** (1997): "Reminiscent of the Australian hit Strictly Ballroom (1992), this romantic comedy from Japan was a hit in its country of origin, despite (or perhaps because of) its tacit criticisms of the restrictive aspects of Japanese culture. Shohei Sugiyama (Koji Yakusho) is a typically strait-laced Japanese businessmen who, passing by in his commuter train one day, glimpses a beautiful young woman, Mai (real-life ballerina Tamiyo Kusakari) through the window of a dance school. Obsessed with her, Shohei enrolls in the school and meets instructor Mai, who at first mistakes Shohei for a philanderer. To her surprise, however, Shohei is a naturally gifted dancer interested in an artistic partnership only, and Mai begins training with him for a competition. Meanwhile, Shohei becomes familiar with his eccentric fellow students, including one person that Shohei already knows, a co-worker (Akira Emoto) who blooms in the dance sessions as a bewigged master of rumba. As dancing is frowned upon in Japan as a frivolous enterprise for a respectable businessman, Shohei keeps his sideline hobby secret, leading his wife to believe that he's being unfaithful and to hire a private investigator to follow him." Winner of over fifty awards, including fourteen Awards of the Japanese Academy Award, including Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Art Direction, Best Cinematography, Best Director, Best Editing, Best Film, Best Music Score, and Best Screenplay (1997).

**Shogun Assassin** (1980): "More a 'greatest hits' movie than an actual stand-alone film of its own, Shogun Assassin is the delirious hybrid of two episodes of the popular Baby Cart series dubbed into English and fused together into a hyper-violent bloodbath ballet that's sure to entertain the samurai-film enthusiast with a strong stomach. The swords fly fast and furious as a wondering shogun is forced into exile after being framed and his wife murdered. Giving his infant son the choice between the merciful release of death (represented by a ball) and the life of constant threat and danger (a sword) the child reaches for the sword, marking the beginning of a brutally violent struggle for survival among a sea of would-be assassins. From this point on plot is secondary, focusing instead on a series of violent vignettes in which limbs fly freely in a furious blur of lightning swords. Utilizing masterful swordsmanship in addition to a cleverly designed and lethal baby carriage, father and son are in a constant state of ultra-alert adrenalized awareness, conscious that instant death may lurk beyond every carefully chosen path."

**Silk** (2007): "Francois Girard's adaptation of Alessandro Baricco's novel Silk is a visually stunning epic spanning two continents. The film stars Michael Pitt as a young Frenchman who travels to Japan at the request of a wealthy silkworm magnate who asks him to smuggle back some new worms. The mission succeeds, and this allows the man to live in great comfort with his wife (Keira Knightley). After a few years, they are unable to conceive a child, a situation that leads to the man taking on a lover during his subsequent visits to Japan."
Snow Falling on Cedars (1999): "Nine years after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, a small town in the Pacific Northwest still struggles with the troubling legacy of U.S. policies against Asian-Americans. In December 1950, just off the shores of San Piedro Island in Washington, a Japanese-American man named Kazuo Miyamoto (Rick Yune) stands accused of murder after his close friend Carl Heine (Eric Thal) is found drowned in icy waters. As the trial gets under way, with Alvin Hooks (James Rebhorn) prosecuting Kazuo and Nels Gudmundsson (Max Von Sydow) defending him, reporter Ishmael Chambers (Ethan Hawke) covers the proceedings for the local newspaper. It's difficult for Ishmael to view the trial objectively, as his first love was a Japanese-American girl named Hatsue (Youki Kudoh), who later married Kazuo. Now, Ishmael has discovered that, when the Japanese-American residents of San Piedro Island were sent to internment camps during World War II, Carl's mother used their incarceration to scuttle a land purchase by Kazuo's family. This could suggest a motive for murder, but Ishmael is reluctant to step forward with the story. Snow Falling on Cedars was based on the best-selling novel by David Guterson, adapted for the screen by Ron Bass and writer/director Scott Hicks."

Spirited Away (2001): "Master animation director Hayao Miyazaki follows up on his record-breaking 1997 opus Princess Mononoke with this surreal Alice in Wonderland-like tale about a lost little girl. The film opens with ten-year-old Chihiro riding along during a family outing as her father races through remote country roads. When they come upon a blocked tunnel, her parents decide to have a look around - even though Chihiro finds the place very creepy. When they pass through the tunnel, they discover an abandoned amusement park. As Chihiro's bad vibes continue, her parents discover an empty eatery that smells of fresh food. After her mother and father help themselves to some tasty purloined morsels, they turn into giant pigs. Chihiro understandably freaks out and flees. She learns that this very weird place, where all sorts of bizarre gods and monsters reside, is a holiday resort for the supernatural after their exhausting tour of duty in the human world. Soon after befriending a boy named Haku, Chihiro learns the rules of the land: one, she must work, as laziness of any kind is not tolerated; and two, she must take on the new moniker of Sen. If she forgets her real name, Haku tells her, then she will never be permitted to leave." Winner of Best Animated Feature Oscar (2003), Best Film and Best Song at the Awards of the Japanese Academy (2002), and Best Asian Film at the Hong Kong Film Awards (2002).

The Stratosphere Girl (2004): "This imaginative independent drama was written and directed by German filmmaker M.X. Oberg and shot on location in Cologne and Tokyo. Angela (Chloé Winkel) is a French art student living in Germany who loves to draw comics and creates elaborate tales drawn in a soft and romantic style. One night, Angela meets Yamamoto (Jon Yang), a club DJ from Japan, who invites her to come to Tokyo with him. Infatuated with Yamamoto, Angela impulsively agrees, and is soon sharing an apartment with a handful of Western expatriates who work at a nightclub where Japanese businessmen drink, sing karaoke, and date the "hostesses" for a fee. When money runs low, Angela signs on to work at the club, but when a customer is murdered in an ongoing mob war, she realizes she's entered a far more dangerous world than she imagined. The frantic pace of the city and the violence of her new environment has a strong impact on her artwork, which loses its serene qualities and becomes increasingly aggressive and mechanical. Hauntingly stylized and feverishly sensual, this English-language film mixes film noir with anime to create a disturbing dream world that is mesmerizing to the final, astonishing frame."

The Taste of Tea (2004): "Director Katsuhito Ishii, known in America for his animated sequence in Kill Bill Pt. 2 and highly stylized works like Shark Skin Man and Peach Hip Girl, gives the viewer a comedic slice of life in this film about an artistic family, the Harunos, and their rural village. With their mother reentering the anime business, musical grandfather conceptually akin to Yoko Ono, and hypnotist father practicing his trade on willing family members, siblings Hajime and Sachiko have the mental freedom to roam deep into imagined worlds that comprise the film's series of episodic vignettes. Hajime's infatuation with a girl at school becomes an obsession that bears fruit due to his commitment to meeting her. Sachiko's giant ghost follows her, leading her to believe that if she can master a back flip on the gym bars that she will scare the ghost away. The absurdity in the narrative is underscored by visual impossibilities, for example a train rushing out of Hajime's head, and other bizarre live-action animation. Interestingly, each character's dilemma
is based on external forces. Tensions between family members are non-existent in The Taste of Tea, reinforcing the idea that artistic minds must stick together in an increasingly unpredictable world.

**Tokyo!** (2008): "Directors Michel Gondry, Bong Joon-ho, and Leos Carax each direct a segment of this triptych feature about life in twenty-first century Tokyo. The saga begins with Gondry's segment, entitled "Interior Design," about a young couple (Hiroko and Akira) who moves in with an old friend (Akemi) while attempting to establish themselves in Tokyo. As Akira takes his first steps toward becoming a filmmaker, Hiroko begins to experience a startling metamorphosis that instills her with a newfound sense of peace and purpose. The second chapter, Leos Carax's "Merde," follows the debased exploits of an unsightly subterranean creature (Denis Lavant) who emerges from the Tokyo sewers to taunt, torment, and terrorize the unsuspecting denizens of the city. The trilogy winds to a close with Bong Joon-ho's "Shaking Tokyo," in which a reclusive pizza addict who hasn't left his apartment in over a decade falls for a pretty delivery girl at the very same moment an earthquake hits Japan. Later, the agoraphobic man discovers that the object of his affections has become a hikikomori herself, and boldly ventures out of his apartment in order to declare his love. The moment he sets eyes on her, the ground starts to rumble once again."

**Tokyo-Ga** (1985): "In this intriguing documentary, award-winning German director and producer Wim Wenders combines clips from one of his favorite directors, Ozu Yasujiro, with actual scenes from the sprawling, crowded megalopolis of Tokyo to discover where the real world and cinematic license may intersect, if at all. Ozu's films captured the poignant and fleeting aspects of worldly existence -- as in colorful autumn leaves that cannot last long. Wenders almost emulates his technique when he decides, in this ninety-two minute look at Tokyo -- to spend time on fragments of city life that are telling, eloquent statements of a Japanese ethic. Golfers on city rooftops, the neon lights of the famous Ginza shopping area, baseball games in a cemetery, the omnipresent televisions (even in taxis), and the waxed-over food that stands for months and years in restaurant windows to advertise the menu are all surreal and eloquent scenes. Juxtaposed against the noise and bustling crowds in a city in which people live elbow-to-elbow -- and contrasted with viewpoints on Ozu offered by two former associates -- these scenes and their counterpoints present a well-rounded view of Tokyo, Ozu, and what it means to be Wim Wenders filming in Japan."

**Tokyo Godfathers** (2003): "Satoshi Kon's third feature (following Perfect Blue and Millennium Actress) confirms his status as one of the most interesting directors working in anime. Tokyo Godfathers takes place in Shinjuku, Tokyo, on Christmas Eve and centers on three homeless people: Hana, a flamboyant, transvestite entertainer; Gin, an middle-aged, alcoholic, former bicycle racer; and Miyuki, a sullen teenage runaway. Their tenuous existence becomes more chaotic when they set out to find the parents of an abandoned baby. They scream insults as they confront the lies they've told each other--and themselves--about the past. Yet they remain curiously endearing and even noble. All three care passionately about the abandoned infant and they love each other, although they're loath to admit it. Kon skillfully uses color to suggest the bitter winter cold and the characters' alienation. Tokyo Godfathers shows that battling the inner demons that led these three characters to skid row can be a more daunting challenge than fighting aliens and cyborgs."

**The Twilight Samurai** (2002): "Veteran filmmaker Yoji Yamada - who is perhaps most famous for cranking out most of the 48 films of the Tora-san series - directs this good-natured drama set in the waning years of the Edo period (1600-1867). Seibei (Hiroyuki Sanada) is a low-level samurai struggling to get by on stipend of 50 rice bales a year while working as a clerk at the clan office. While his co-workers spend their evenings sucking down sake at the local pub, Seibei, whose wife has passed away, heads straight home to care for his two young daughters and doddering mother. One day, his friend Michinojo (Mitsuru Fukikoshi) tells him that his boyhood friend Tomoe (Rie Miyazawa), is leaving her thuggish husband and returning home. Tomoe soon starts to frequent Seibei's house, taking care of his daughters, while Seibei quietly falls in love with the attractive young lass. After defeating Tomoe's husband in a duel, armed with only a pointed stick, Seibei is asked by Michinojo if he wants to marry Tomoe. Seibei
declines, too embarrassed by his poverty to accept. Later, as he prepares to perform the distasteful task of killing a fellow samurai, he learns that Tomoe is engaged to another man."

Winner of thirteen Japanese Academy Awards, including Best Film, Best Actress, Best Director and Best Cinematography (2003) and winner of Best Asian Film at the Hong Kong Film Awards (2004).

**When the Last Sword is Drawn** (2003): "The film, directed by Yijiro Takita, opens in Tokyo in 1899, when an elderly man, Saito (Koichi Sato), brings his young grandson to see a local doctor, Ono (Takehiro Murata). Saito notices an old photo of a samurai in the doctor's home and asks him about it. As it turns out, the photo is of Yoshimura (Kiichi Nakai of *Warriors of Heaven and Earth*), and both men had a strong connection to him. Saito and Ono take turns reminiscing about their experiences, and the film flashes back 30 years to the tumultuous beginnings of the Meiji era, when the emperor, bent on modernization, consolidated his power, and the shogunate with its samurai was phased out. Saito remembers Yoshimura as a fellow member of the Shinsegumi, a samurai group divided between loyalty to its shogun and the defense of the emperor. Saito looked down on the money-grubbing, shabbily dressed Yoshimura from the moment they met, and even decided to kill him. But Yoshimura soon proved his prowess with the sword, and his commitment to samurai ideals. Ono remembers Yoshimura as the disgraced father of his best friend. Yoshimura abandoned his village and his clan during a famine to join the Shinsegumi, and as the story unfolds, his motives come to light. Caught in the middle between conflicting forces, their way of life rendered obsolete, Saito loses contact with Yoshimura during a bloody battle and assumes he is dead. Ono tells him of the misunderstood samurai's true fate." Nominated for several Japanese Academy Awards in 2003, and won for Best Actor, Best Supporting Actor, and Best Picture.

**The Yakuza** (1975): "Between making *They Way We Were* and *Three Days of The Condor*, Sydney Pollack (who won a Best Director Oscar for *Tootsie* in 1982) directed this little-seen thriller from a script by Paul Schrader (his first script, which would be followed by scripts for *Taxi Driver* and *Raging Bull*) and Robert Towne (who won the Academy Award for Best Screen Play in 1974 for *Chinatown*, directed by Roman Polanski). *The Yakuza* stars Robert Mitchum, in one of his best roles of the 70s, as Harry Kilmer, a former American soldier who returns to Japan to help rescue the daughter of his friend George Tanner (Brian Keith). Once he arrives in the country, Kilmer discovers that the daughter has been kidnapped by the Japanese mafia, called the Yakuza, in Kyoto. In order to battle the ruthless organized crime outfit and save the girl, Kilmer finds himself left with few options and reluctantly enlists the help of his old nemesis, Tanaka (stoically performed by Ken Takakura)."

**Yojimbo** (1961): "Toshiro Mifune portrays a Samurai who finds himself in the middle of a feud-torn Japanese village. Neither side is particularly honorable, but Mifune is hungry and impoverished, so he agrees to work as bodyguard (or Yojimbo) for a silk merchant (Kamatari Fujiwara) against a sake merchant (Takashi Shimura). He then pretends to go to work for the other, the better to let the enemies tear each other apart. Imprisoned for his "treachery," he escapes just in time to watch the two warring sides wipe each other out. This was his plan all along, and now that peace has been restored, he leaves the village for further exploits. *Yojimbo* was the prototype for the Clint Eastwood "Man with No Name" picture *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964). The difference is that *Fistful* relies on Eastwood for its success, whereas *Yojimbo* scores on every creative level, from director Akira Kurosawa to cinematographer Kazuo Miyagawa to Mifune's classic lead performance."