

FILM

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

LAST year was a fairly average year for blockbuster films. While comic-book and animated movies continued to reign supreme, Hollywood's insistence on reusing old ideas came back to haunt them, with the *Ben-Hur* remake and *Ghostbusters* "reboot" among a handful that bombed at the box office. This isn't a new phenomenon, as films more often than not fail to live up to their hype. As delicious proof, here's a look at some of Hollywood's biggest flops.

> THE 13TH WARRIOR (1999)

Estimated budget: \$160 million

Estimated loss: \$137 million

Based on Michael Crichton's novel *Eaters of the Dead* and starring Antonio Banderas, *The 13th Warrior* is statistically the worst financially performing film of all time. Loosely based on the legend of Beowulf, this flick was the most expensive production at the time of its release. Although a moderate success, grossing over \$60 million, *The 13th Warrior* needed to make three times that amount to break even. Which it obviously didn't.

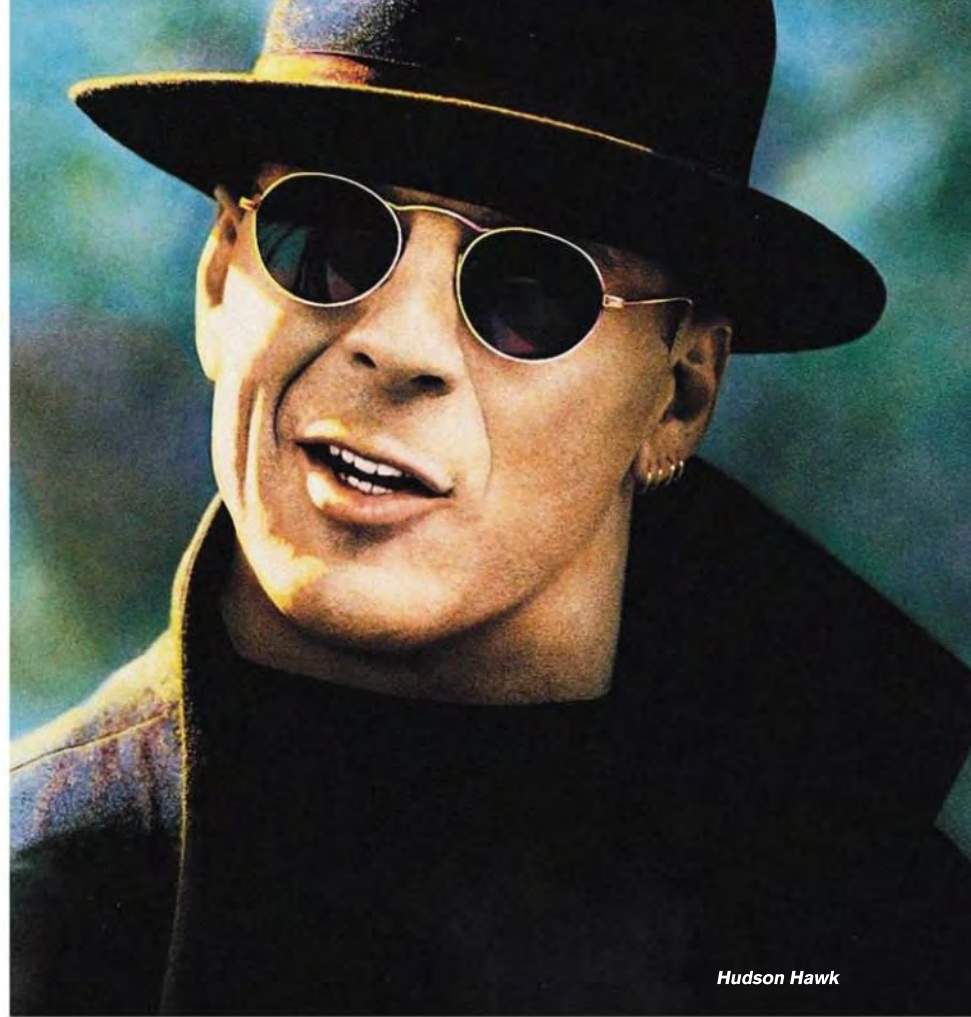
Critic's review: "The film is fascinating to watch, but I can hardly say what it's about, other than people killing each other."—Jeff Millar, *Houston Chronicle*

> CUTTHROAT ISLAND (1995)

Estimated budget: \$98 million

Estimated loss: \$147 million

Before *Pirates of the Caribbean* made seafaring films box-office gold, director Renny Harlin nearly destroyed the genre with *Cutthroat Island*. The production was besieged with problems from the get-go: Michelle Pfeiffer pulled out and was replaced by Harlin's then-wife, Geena Davis, alongside Michael Douglas. Douglas soon quit after constant script changes and was replaced by poor sap Matthew Modine. It only got worse during shooting, with a cameraman falling from a crane and breaking his leg, staff walking off the set, and a tank used for ocean scenes



Hudson Hawk

filling with raw sewage following a pipe burst. The film lasted less than a month in theaters, and stunted the careers of Davis, Modine, and Harlin for over a decade while sending studio Carolco into bankruptcy.

Critic's review: "It takes a two-hour act of will to keep facing the screen during this moribund movie."—Desson Howe, *The Washington Post*

> HUDSON HAWK (1991)

Estimated budget: \$65 million

Estimated loss: \$48 million

Bruce Willis made a name for himself playing the everyman action hero in *Die Hard*, but his role in *Hudson Hawk* almost put the kibosh on his career. Willis played Hawk, a recently paroled cat burglar who spends the film traveling the world stealing priceless da Vinci artifacts while being chased by a wealthy couple, the CIA, and the Vatican. If it sounds absurd, it is. The plot is ridiculous, the script humorless, the acting woeful, and the chemistry between leading man Willis and Andie McDowell nonexistent. It took three years for Willis to regain his credibility (with *Pulp Fiction*), but *Hudson Hawk* still stands as his worst feature yet.

Critic's review: "This unspeakable

awful can make an audience a little crazy. You want to throw things, yell at the actors, tell them to stop."—Peter Travers, *Rolling Stone*

> HEAVEN'S GATE (1980)

Estimated budget: \$44 million

Estimated loss: \$114 million

After the success of 1978's Oscar-winning *The Deer Hunter*, the late director Michael Cimino received full creative control for his western follow-up, *Heaven's Gate*. The film focused on the battle between wealthy landowners and struggling farmers, with country-singer-turned-actor Kris Kristofferson and Christopher Walken the unlikely leads. Shot entirely on location and going well over budget, the near four-hour epic bombed big-time. A shorter cut was eventually rereleased but fared even worse. The film put an end to the western until *Unforgiven* revived the genre in the nineties. Cimino never directed a big-budget epic again, and the loss was the last straw in the death spiral of United Artists.

Critic's review: "It really is a stinker!"—Dave Kehr, *Chicago Reader*

*All estimated losses have been adjusted for inflation.



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TECH

WINTER PARTY ESSENTIALS

WE'RE GEARING UP FOR THE LONG, COLD WINTER...SO GET GLOVED UP, MAN—IT'S FUCKING FREEZING OUT THERE.

1 / DeWalt Heated Jacket

\$100 and up dewalt.com

Even if it's not face-numbingly cold where you live, we still recommend getting a jacket that can handle all conditions, including wind and rain. The Dewalt heated jacket comes with all the amenities. Fully charged it lasts seven and a half hours, has three or four temperature settings (depending on the model), and even comes with a USB phone charger.

2 / Outdoor Tech Kodiak Plus Waterproof Powerbank

\$80 outdoortechology.com

You can never have too much power—not when you're a slave to your iPhone. And if you're outdoors, you'll need something rugged and durable to boot. This powerbank box o' electricity is fully submersible, shock absorbant, and will juice up your devices—two at a time—in just a few hours. It also does double (triple?) duty as a flashlight.

3 / Hammacher Schlemmer 80-Foot Snowball Launcher

\$35 hammacher.com

What's a party in the snow without a snowball launcher? Not a party we'd like to attend, that's for sure. Launch softball-size snowballs at that guy dancing a little too closely to your lady friend, or just start a snow fight. Simply place snow in the forming chamber, close the lid, and pull the trigger. It's made for kids eight and up, so it suits us perfectly.

4 / Airblaster Merino Ninja Suit

\$190 myairblaster.com

If you like being outdoors but don't like to be cold, you should probably just stay home. If this isn't an option, then get yourself this one-piece thermal base layer. Made of Woolverino, a merino-wool and synthetic blend, the Ninja is soft and toasty. It's also lightweight, fast-drying, and won't absorb your stink. Who can say no to that?

5 / UE Roll Wireless Bluetooth Speaker

\$150 ultimateears.com

For our requisite music, we need something that's portable, packs some punch, and can handle the weather. The Roll wireless speaker fits the description. Furthermore, its 65-foot Bluetooth range and nine-hour rechargeable battery ensure we can party well into the wee hours, and the music won't cut out if we stagger off too far.



6 / UCO Titan Stormproof Match Kit

\$10 ucogear.com

Humans love fire, especially when we're drunk and outdoors. These matches are the ones you want when you're out in the elements and desperate to light that joint...er, campfire. Windproof and easy to light, each match will stay lit for up to 25 seconds, and will even relight after being submerged in water. The kit includes 12 matches, three replaceable strikers, and a waterproof case and cord.

7 / Jetboil MiniMo Cooking System \$135

Grande Coffee Press \$15 jetboil.com

The best thing about cold-weather camping? The hot meal you somehow manage to whip together. The compact MiniMo makes it possible—easy to set up and break down, you can boil up to a liter of water, and you can cook and eat out of the same pot. The stove has a low-simmer control, which means your menu options are vastly improved. In the morning, break out the Grande press and make yourself some damn good coffee. ☕

GAMING

ART ATTACK: THE LAST GUARDIAN


Sony (PS4)

YOU won't fire rocket launchers or carjack anything in *The Last Guardian*, and yet this unconventional adventure has inspired a more fervent fan following during its decade of development than any installment of the *Call of Duty* or *Grand Theft Auto* series. *Guardian* is the latest masterwork of Fumito Ueda, the auteur designer of *Ico* and *Shadow of the Colossus*. When the late film critic Roger Ebert famously declared in 2006 that games could never be art, angry gamers used their middle fingers to boot up *Ico* and *Colossus* as examples of titles that transcended the medium (see sidebar). Both games delivered

deep puzzles, otherworldly landscapes, and AI partners that inspired a real bond. *The Last Guardian* combines all of these elements into an emotional roller coaster that even Ebert might have considered more than just a game.

Guardian's tale unfolds in a curious flashback format, with your main character recounting how he once escaped from a mysterious castle with the help of a titanic half-bird/half-cat beast named Trico. You'll spend the game slowly earning Trico's trust, training it with snacks and plucking out arrows and spears hurled by the castle's guards. You can gauge Trico's mood—from calm to cautious to angry—by watching the color of his

eyes. Direct Trico with calls and treats to demolish obstacles, activate switches, or just serve as a bridge over bottomless chasms. Eventually you can clamber up Trico's back and ride him à la that hippie kid from *The NeverEnding Story* (why did you wait so long to call her fucking name, Bastian?).

Controlling this winged cat-thing can get frustrating—the creature has a mind of its own—but eventually, through training and near-death escapes, your bond will grow so strong that interactions become more instinctive. You'll actually start to care for Trico. That's when *Guardian* begins to play with your emotions. Suddenly, it's the game's turn to push your buttons. 

MASTERWORKS: FOUR PIECES OF INTERACTIVE ART

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ICO

(2001, PS2)

This first game from *Guardian* designer Ueda introduces the arty touches—such as sun-soaked visuals and deep inter-character relationships—that would come to define his later titles. Players must help a princess escape a stark castle crawling with grabby shadow monsters.

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GRIM FANDANGO

(1998, PC)

This classic adventure from beloved LucasArts designer Tim Schafer plays like an art deco fever dream. Its groundbreaking 3D character art lets players solve puzzles just by watching the body language of skeletal chain-smoking hero Manny Calavera, travel agent of the afterlife.

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BIOSHOCK

(2007, XBOX 360, PS3, PC)

A game about the power of choice, *BioShock* lets players slay their way through an underwater city crawling with Prohibition-era monstrosities and waifish little girls you can either spare or “harvest” for more power. It ends in a shocking twist that suggests choice was just an illusion all along.

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SHADOW OF THE

COLOSSUS

(2005, PS3)

The Last Guardian's roots show in this immersive adventure. Players clamber up badass monsters that look and shamble like shaggy mountains, seeking weak points to bring them down. Entire books have been written about the artistic merits of this game, considered the “Mona Lisa” of interactive entertainment.



CABOOBERNET SAUVIGNON



Porous Walker