10 Best End Credit Needle Drops of the 80s

A movie can hit all the right notes for 95 percent of the film – but if it fumbles the ending, it can immediately lose the audience, turning what could have been an unforgettable experience into a disappointing one. One of the things that helps make an ending memorable (besides the screenplay, of course) is the use of music. Music can reinforce the tone and message of the film while also enhancing the emotional impact of the ending scene.

That said, below are ten of the best ending credit needle drops of the 1980s (warning – there will be spoilers):

1. "Paint It Black" - Rolling Stones

Full Metal Jacket (1987)

Full Metal Jacket is a dark, dark movie about Vietnam – as it should be. From the brutal bullying that drives one soldier insane during the training sequences in the first half, to the sniper battle in the second, "Paint it Black" is about as fitting an ending song as such a movie could have.

What makes the song even more harrowing is that it transitions from the surviving soldiers walking through a burning landscape as they sing the Mickey Mouse Club anthem. There's something unsettlingly funny about this – no surprise since Kubrick was a darkly funny director who often used pitch-black humor in his films. But it also showed that these soldiers were just a bunch of kids thrown into a hellish situation no person deserves to be in.

And cutting to "Paint It Black" by the Stones immediately strips away the innocence of the sing-along, capping the movie with a real sense of fatalism.

2. "Don't You (Forget About Me)" - Simple Minds

The Breakfast Club

The Breakfast Club is one of the most iconic films of the 80s and one of the first to really understand its subject matter: the struggles of being a teenager. Each character represents a high school trope that has stood the test of time (nerd, smart girl, goth, jock, and burnout), but as the film goes on, it reveals layered individuals with real depth.

Despite their surface differences, the cast of characters discover they have a lot in common, forming a bond through their shared struggle to grow up under difficult circumstances. The entire film takes place during detention at their local high school. Once they are released, we see them get picked up one by one by their parents – and everyone has seemingly learned something about themselves – that they are not alone.

Bender, the burnout, is the only one who walks off alone, but even he has a newfound sense of self. The incredibly upbeat song "Don't You (Forget About Me)" by Simple Minds kicks off with

Bender fist pumping in the air – an act of both joy and rebellion. The song itself, while upbeat, describes the fear of losing connection and desiring recognition, reflecting the very real struggle of the characters.

3. "People Are Stranger" - Echo and the Bunnymen

The Lost Boys

The Lost Boys is in many ways the perfect 80s movie. It's got a gang of 80s-style punk vampires terrorizing a small town, as well as a young boy and his older brother who have just moved there and must contend with them. It's equal parts thrilling, funny, and cheesy in all the best ways, not to mention a bit tongue-in-cheek. This is no more apparent than at the end:

After a bloody battle with a sleepy seaside town's local gang of vampires, the main character's grandfather comes crashing into the house in his truck, killing the head vampire. He climbs out of the truck and caps off the film with this hilarious quote: "One thing about living in Santa Carla that I could never stomach: all the damn vampires."

The family stares at him in disbelief, not realizing the grandfather even knew there were vampires. And, after a few seconds, the perfect needle drop – a cover of The Doors' "People Are Strange" by Echo and the Bunnymen. What better way to fade to the end credits than with an ironic wink at the audience for a movie like this?

4. "Stand by Me" - Ben E. King

Stand by Me

Anyone who watched *Stand by Me* as a child remembers the movie for its spirit and lively group of friends. Almost everyone had a group of friends at that age, and every summer was filled with a sense of adventure. As a child, the ending of the movie is surprisingly dark as the narrator, out of nowhere, explains that they eventually lost touch and that one of them died. But as an adult, the ending hits even harder – but not for that reason.

The film is about the loss of innocence. But when we are brought into the present by the narrator, it's his last line that leaves a mark: "I never had any friends later on like the ones I had when I was twelve. Jesus, does anyone?" Any adult who watches this film feels that line in their bones. And the song that plays, "Stand by Me," is about loyalty and companionship in the face of hardship, which is what the group of friends experienced throughout the film.

It's a perfect encapsulation of the main character's memories of his friends and a very specific time in his childhood he'll never forget.

5. "It Had to Be You" - Harry Connick Jr.

When Harry Met Sally (1989)

When Harry Met Sally is considered by many to be the pinnacle of the rom-com – and with good reason. Nora Ephron's screenplay is perfect, and its two leads, Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal, are not only charming and funny, but also share a chemistry few on-screen couples have matched since.

The film traces the history of two friends who are never in a position to date each other for one reason or another. Eventually, their friendship blossoms into something much more. It uses the familiar will-they-or-won't-they trope in an incredibly fresh way. When they finally get together, we are treated to Harry Connick Jr.'s "It Had to Be You," which explains that they were always destined for each other. The song basically serves as the movie's final word.

Not to mention, it's a romantic song sung in the old-school crooner style: perfect for a romantic comedy.

6. "Blue Moon" - The Marcels

An American Werewolf in London

While certainly not the first movie to blend horror and comedy, *An American Werewolf in London* is one of the first to perfect the balance between the two. Executives were terrified that the film was either too scary to be funny or too funny to be scary. Its success showed that it was possible to be both terrifying and hilarious at the same time, influencing countless films in the decades to come, from the Evil Dead series to Gremlins and more.

The film ends with a bonkers sequence in which the main character, David, goes on a rampage through the middle of London as the werewolf until the police ultimately shoot him down. In the last scene of the film, his love interest, Alex, cries as she stands over David, who has returned to human form and is dying from his wounds. The film suddenly breaks into the classic doo-wop song "Blue Moon" by the Marcels, which starts with a goofy, lighthearted chorus (bomp-baba-bomp-ba-bomp-ba-bomp-bomp), and we cut to credits.

The song creates tonal whiplash, pulling you out of the tragic death of the main character to remind you that what you just watched was, technically, a comedy. Brilliant.

7. "Never Explain Love" - Al Jarreau

Do the Right Thing

Do the Right Thing took the world by storm when it was released in 1989. Few movies explored social anger the way it did from the point of view of a black community in Brooklyn. It was an explosive movie that started with a bang, playing Public Enemy's "Fight the Power" over its intro credit sequence. The film builds up to a boiling point, exploding into a riot in its climax.

But then something interesting happens. Spike Lee, the director and main actor, fades into dual quotes by Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, accompanied by soulful sax. It then transitions to

the end credits, during which Al Jarreau's "Never Explain Love" plays. It's a low-key love song with a quiet tone that starkly contrasts with the film's climax.

Whereas "Fight the Power" represents the anger that builds up in an oppressed community, "Never Explain Love" represents the love fostered by a tight-knit community. In the middle of the film, Radio Raheem explains the eternal battle between hate and love, concluding that love always conquers hate. Ending the movie with a song about love suggests that, despite anger and hate overwhelming the community, love can still win out.

8. "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'" - The Righteous Brothers

Top Gun

This one is a bit of a cheat since the actual song running over the credit scroll is "Mighty Wings" by Cheap Trick. But the scene before that contains a montage of the primary cast members with their respective credits in a sequence that was more common in that era than it is now.

Before this cast montage, we see a scene in which Maverick sits alone at a bar, waiting for Charlotte, his love interest. He doesn't think she's coming, so he gets up to leave.

This entire scene is accompanied by “You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feelin.” In a bit of editing brilliance, the song builds to a crescendo when Charlotte appears behind him, then slows down so they can exchange words without being overwhelmed by the music. It then builds back up as they embrace and the movie takes us into the cast montage.

Once the cast montage ends, we see a pair of jets twirling in an orange sky, cutting the song off and transitioning into the more exciting Cheap Trick song. But the Righteous Brothers song is the first end credit song – and is a much better ending song for the movie's actual story.

9. "Oh Yeah" - Yello

Ferris Bueller's Day Off

"Oh Yeah" is memorable not just for the song's strangeness, but because it extends the film into a comedic scene starring principal Ed Rooney. The song sets the perfect tone for his hilarious plight as he limps onto a school bus and is forced to sit amidst a crowd of rambunctious children, hating his life almost as much as he hates Ferris Bueller in that moment.

This comedic scene, which has no real bearing on the actual story, is simply a fun way to end the film. And the last note of the song (the infamous "chicka-chicka") is interrupted by the return of Ferris, who breaks the fourth wall when asking why the audience is still there. The entire end credit scene is unforgettable – and this is a rare case in which the choice of song is arguably what makes the scene so funny.

10. "Joy to the World" - Three Dog Night

The Big Chill

Lawrence Kasdan's *The Big Chill* is one of the all-time great depictions of the baby boomer generation. Its soundtrack is filled with classics, with hits from Marvin Gaye, the Rolling Stones, Aretha Franklin, the Temptations, and more. With a soundtrack like that, you have to end the movie on the perfect note – and *The Big Chill* delivers.

The film follows a group of college friends in their 30s who gather at a vacation home to bury their friend, Alex. His suicide forces them to reevaluate their lives and how things have changed since they last saw each other. In the film's final scene, they gather around the breakfast table before leaving to return to their normal lives. They've come to a general sense of acceptance of their lives, and their bond has grown as a result of the tumultuous weekend.

And so, it's only fitting that Three Dog Night's "Joy to the World" plays over the credits. The film also happens to start with the song – right before they find out about the death of Alex.

Returning to it at the end marks the return to normality. It's also a song from the early 70s, when they were in college. It's nostalgic to the main characters and reminds them of the time they were all together and happy. A beautiful way to give the characters closure while keeping their memories of their friend Alex alive.

Many films choose to end on a song instead of a piece of score. However, few films put much thought into the choice. It often comes down to "this song sounds cool here." These ten films use songs that specifically address the film's message or tone in a way that not only strengthens the ending but also elevates the entire film.