

Finally, another movie that I loved for some reason, "Kramer vs. Kramer" is a courtroom drama starring Dustin Hoffman, the story of a father who, after his wife leaves, takes care of his young son (who was my peer at the time) alone and has to fight for custody. Now, as a father myself, I can look at this film from a different perspective. Back then, I just loved movies with Dustin. They're still good to this day.

Kirk Douglas appears on this list again thanks to the sci-fi movie "Saturn 3" about a deadly cyborg that turns against the crew of a small space station. One can argue whether this B-class cinema is timeless, but for a six-year-old, the giant brain in a jar and the very concept of a killer robot were stunning. Yes, it was before watching "Terminator." Not just for me, though, because all the boys from my kindergarten were excited about the events in the rings of Saturn. And I fell in love with science fiction, and it has stayed with me till this day.

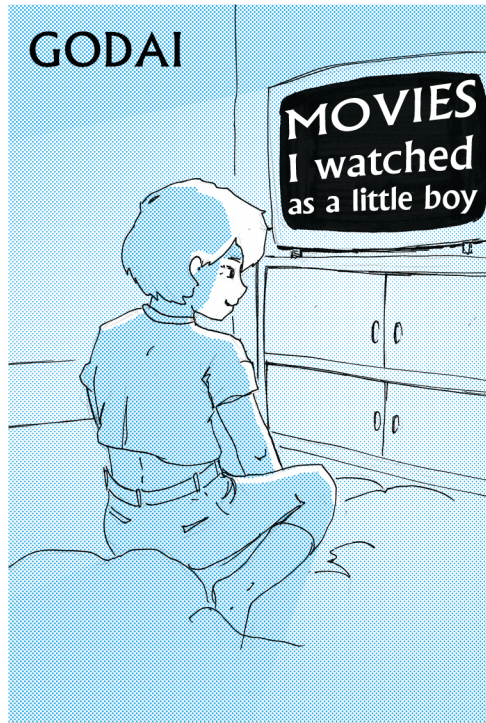
The list of movies from my childhood is, of course, much longer. These are just a few of the first, important, earliest, and most memorable ones. Titles, names, stories - over the next 40 years, I got to know plenty of them. Great ones, good ones, average ones, but favorites.

But these are the ones I watched as a boy.

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Movies and novels with historical themes were much more popular back then. "Spartacus" with Kirk Douglas was one of those revered pictures that thrives in viewers' memories to this day. The story of the brave leader of the gladiators and slaves uprising was also esteemed in Poland - we even had a native novel on the subject. The tale of the Thracian who stood against Rome was full of struggle, heroism, and pathos. What better nourishment for young minds and imaginations than such heroes?

"Shogun" is the only series on this list, but I can't skip it. Each of us wanted to be Anjin-san because perhaps only him did we understand even if just a little. Exotic, wild, Each episode was a week of conversations, games, and immersion in events. The fights, escapes, and crazy plot twists were probably even better than in the adventures of Captain Kloss!

"Kelly's Heroes" was the first Western war film I remember, so different from "Four Tank-Men and a Dog" or "More Than Life at Stake." Gripping, dramatic, funny, and exciting. And with great characters. For me, it was the first of a whole series of action flicks, such as "Where Eagles Dare" or "The Guns of Navarone," from which I smoothly - already in high school - transitioned to productions like "All Quiet on the Western Front." The one from 1979, of course.

The world was different back then. Behind the Iron Curtain, the 80s didn't look like they do in "Stranger Things." When I was a little boy - before I went to school - you could escape by listening to the radio, reading books - but I only learned that at the age of 6 - or by watching movies.

Movies, unlike now, were a special event. Everyone watched the same ones because there were only two channels on TV, and a movie on Friday night was something nobody wanted to miss.

And although there were plenty of awful things on TV, like Soviet films for the second shift on Thursday mornings or propaganda series like "Four Tank-Men and a Dog" or "More Than Life at Stake" (which we still loved because everyone wanted to be a hero and fight the Nazis), there were also genuinely good things. Or at least decent...

On the black-and-white screen, adventures unfolded that I absorbed.

"The Magnificent Seven" wasn't the first Western I saw, as the genre enjoyed great popularity in Poland, and it was relatively acceptable and safe from the perspective of communist censors. But it was an exceptional film; everything in it seemed like more. More adventure, more action, more drama, and above all, more heroes. It wasn't until I was a teenager that I managed to watch the original story, "Seven Samurai," which impressed me just as strongly.

The first movie I remember - I must have been around 4 years old at the time - is one of those two.

"On The Beach" - a gripping story of people after a global thermonuclear disaster, who in Australia - the last uncontaminated place on Earth - await the arrival of radioactive fallout. I didn't understand much of it, but the world quite different from People's Poland, soldiers, a submarine, and crazy car races stayed with me.

"A Man Called Horse" with Richard Harris's extraordinary performance was, at some level, simply a movie about Indians. Indians, however, were as much a part of our legends as tank crews and double agents. Yet the white slave of the brave tribe, who earned his right to be a warrior and underwent cruel, graphically depicted trials of bravery, was someone who rose above mediocrity.

They were all people in unusual situations, rising above mediocrity.

"Enter the Dragon" was my first Bruce Lee movie and my first martial arts film in general. The story of a young man who lost everything in clashes with the mafia and was left only with revenge deeply with me as a young boy. At that time, I didn't know who Bruce Lee was, that there was Chuck Norris in it, and that there were still many more stunning fights with Lee to come. I also like this movie because I watched it for the very first time with my great-grandmother, who was an important figure in my early childhood.

Madness!

"ConvoY" in a way corresponded to "Kelly's Heroes." The most American of American movies excited us and was the main topic of conversation among boys in my preschool for many days. Mighty trucks, fearless, almost wild men, and extraordinary women behind the wheels of these monsters, along with unmatched humor. And something we, being too young, didn't understand but felt rather love of freedom and opposition to authority. Fighting against the cops? Back then?