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## Every Benedict Cumberbatch Movie, Ranked From Worst To Best

From Doctor Strange to the Dragon Smaug to his lone Oscar nomination, here are Benedict Cumberbatch's films ranked from worst to best.

BY KYLE WILSON    UPDATED APR 10, 2023



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**Benedict Cumberbatch** has proven himself one of the most versatile actors working, but how do his films rank from worst to best? This Academy Award-nominated actor may have hit some snags in his career, but overall, he boasts a filmography as varied and versatile as his talents. Benedict began his career on the British stage before transitioning into television, breaking out in a big way with 2010's *Sherlock*, a show for which he's been nominated for four Emmy Awards, finally winning one in 2014. That show's popularity gave rise to a Cumberbatch fandom, and soon the actor found himself a fixture in multiple franchises, eventually donning the cloak of Doctor Strange in the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Cumberbatch seems to have had little trouble transitioning from franchise fare to serial television to prestige cinema. Whether playing *Star Trek*'s wrathful Khan or *The Hobbit*'s dragon Smaug, he's an actor who radiates both intelligence and warmth, communicating a charming arrogance that can also give way to remarkable pathos. Here are his most major films, ranked from worst to best. Not included in this ranking are movies where Cumberbatch plays a small, unnamed role such as *To Kill a King*, made-for-TV movies like *Starter for 10*, and very small independent releases like *Burlesque Fairytale*s and *Four Lions*.

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34 Zoolander No. 2 (2016)



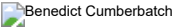
This much-anticipated sequel to the 2001 cult comedy about dim-witted male model Derek Zoolander made its biggest mistake by releasing 15 years after the original and refusing to evolve with the times. Nowhere is that more evident than in Benedict Cumberbatch's cameo as non-binary supermodel All, which was correctly slammed for being transphobic. Co-writer Justin Theroux pushed back, calling the character "satire," but where the incisive commentary resides in a scene that has Owen Wilson asking if All has "*a hot dog or a bun*" remains to be seen. The original Zoolander feature cameos that elevated the movie while Cumberbatch's role in the sequel is best forgotten.

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**33    The Fifth Estate (2013)**



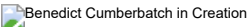
Director Bill Condon nabbed Cumberbatch to play Julian Assange in this ripped-from-the-headlines WikiLeaks film, and prior to its release it seemed primed to be a major Oscar contender. Alas, the resulting film was a critical and commercial dud and for good reason: its intriguing and controversial subject is squandered in a rote, plodding film that's barely even worth watching for Cumberbatch's fairly compelling central performance.

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**32    Creation (2009)**



In 2009, Benedict Cumberbatch appeared in *Creation*, a biopic starring fellow MCU actor [Bettany as legendary](#) scientist Charles Darwin. *Creation* was generally regarded as a middling effort by both critics and audiences, although the performances of the cast received praise, especially Bettany. Cumberbatch played the supporting role of John Dalton Hooker, a close friend of Darwin's and a fellow scientist.

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31 **The Other Boleyn Girl (2003)**



Cumberbatch was right on the verge of breaking out in *Sherlock* when he played a small role here as the husband of King Henry VIII's mistress, Mary Boleyn. He's in good company, surrounded by a cast including Natalie Portman, Scarlett Johansson, Eric Bana, Kristin Scott Thomas, and Mark Rylance. However, Justin Chadwick's costume drama plays more like a highly-produced CW episode edited within an inch of its life, all flash and little substance.

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**30 Third Star (2010)**

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This heartwrenching tale about a dying young man taking one last trip with his friends to the beautiful Barafundle Bay has a sentimental streak only partially undercut by Cumberbatch's bitter and brittle lead performance. It's a film that revels in the melodramatic and the morbid, but its ending still manages to be palpably emotional.

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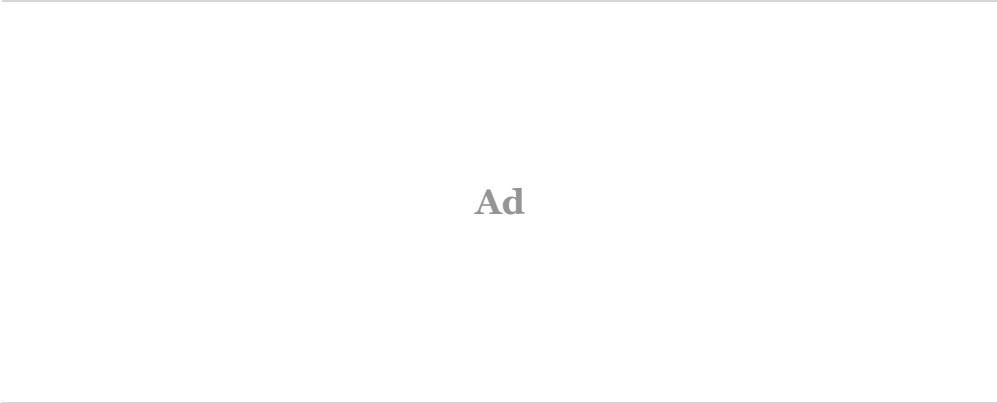
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**29 Mowgli: Legend Of The Jungle (2018)** Shere Khan in Mowgli Legend of the Jungle

Not to be confused with Jon Favreau's 2016 Disney remake, *Mowgli: Legend of the Jungle* is Andy Serkis' darker and considerably bloodier take on the Rudyard Kipling Mowgli stories. Benedict Cumberbatch joins an all-star cast voicing the villainous tiger Shere Khan, but the film too often struggles to find its footing. Despite cutting-edge technology, the visual effects still unfortunately pale in comparison to those of the recent Disney version,

and its brutish violence makes it decidedly not kiddie fare, while simultaneously lacking in the complexity that would appeal to adults.

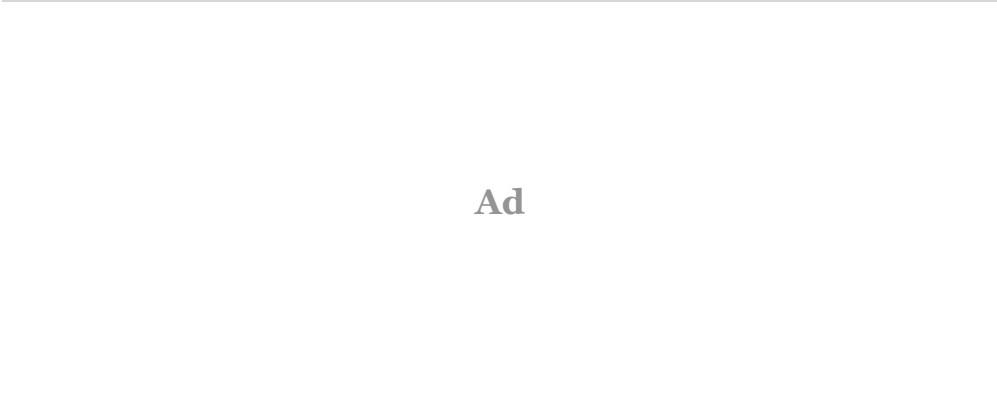


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28 Dr. Seuss' The Grinch (2018)

 Benedict Cumberbatch's version of The Grinch

This fairly pointless animated take on the classic Christmas story from Illumination Studios seems to only exist to introduce the tale to a new generation. Simultaneously, *The Grinch* makes many of the same mistakes as the infinitely-polarizing 2000 live-action *Grinch*, chief among them shoehorning in random contemporary flair to a story that should feel, above all else, timeless. The result is a film that attempts to straddle the line between that version and the 1966 television special, all the while lacking the nonsensical bravura of Jim Carrey's turn in the former and the instant classic status of the latter.



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27 The Hobbit: The Battle Of The Five Armies (2014)

 Ian McKellen as Gandalf in The Hobbit: The Battle of Five Armies

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Benedict Cumberbatch's Smaug is dispensed with fairly quickly in a Bond-esque cold open, ceding the rest of the running time to a bloated CGI-fest that takes the common *Hobbit* film criticism (that it's needlessly drawn-out from a simple children's story) and puts it on steroids. Peter Jackson certainly has his fun staging a film-long battle, particularly in the Extended Edition, but this whole thing feels like an overblown coda to a tale that should've wrapped up hours ago and a painful reminder that Guillermo del Toro probably would've done *Hobbit* better.

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## 26 The Electrical Life Of Louis Wain (2021)

 Claire Foy and Benedict Cumberbatch in Louis Wain on Amazon Prime

*The Electrical Life of Louis Wain* was released in 2021 on Amazon Prime Video, and functions as a dramatized biopic of the titular man (played by Cumberbatch), a late-19th-century artist that became famous for his strange paintings featuring cats. Both critics and audiences received the interestingly named *Electrical Life of Louis Wain* pretty well,


although it's not quite in the upper echelon of movies starring Cumberbatch. Still, Louis Link copied to clipboard the usual dramatic tropes of a biopic by getting a bit whimsical at times, which did actually seem to work in the movie's favor. Cumberbatch is his usual reliable self in the lead.

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## 25 **The Current War (2017)**

The Current War with Benedict Cumberbatch

Originally intended to be distributed in 2017 by The Weinstein Company, this Thomas Edison and George Westinghouse biopic was shelved after the Harvey Weinstein sexual abuse allegations. While it was finally released in 2019, with some reshot footage and ten minutes shaved off, *The Current War* still plays like the death-rattle of Weinstein era awards-bait, a middlingly respectable period film with unfortunately low-wattage.

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## 24 **Amazing Grace (2006)**





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This respectable historical drama about the end of the slave trade in the British Empire is exactly the kind of light prestige with noble intentions one might expect. However, Benedict Cumberbatch's supporting turn as William Pitt the Younger steals the entire show, earning the actor a London Film Critics' Circle award nomination for Best Breakthrough Actor.

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### 23 **Penguins Of Madagascar (2014)**



The villain in Penguins of Madagascar.

For one brief shining cultural moment, there was nothing more bankable than this quartet of flightless birds from the *Madagascar* films. Their debut solo movie is basically a glorified babysitter, 91 minutes of colorful entertainment guaranteed to give kids a few laughs and parents a headache. Chief among its pleasures is Benedict Cumberbatch's turn as Classified, the wolf leader of an inter-species intelligence agency.

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22 **Between Two Ferns: The Movie (2019)**



Zach Galifianakis took his hysterical interview show to the road in this feature-length spin-off. The attention-holding boundaries of stretching a web series into a film are inevitably put to the test, but this is ultimately still no less comedically satisfying than the *Saturday Night Live* film adaptations of the 90s. Benedict Cumberbatch, like many of the film's celebrity cameos, is a great sport, casting quiet looks of despair toward the cameras as Galifianakis repeatedly butchers his name, finally settling on Benadryl Cumberbash.

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21 **The Whistleblower (2010)**



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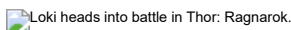
*The Whistleblower*, released in 2010, starred Rachel Weisz as Kathryn Bolkovac, a Nebraska cop who ends up working for a U.N. security contractor in Bosnia. While there, Kathryn uncovers evidence of both human trafficking, and a U.N. attempt to cover it up. Based on a true story, *The Whistleblower* is a good movie, and would likely be higher on this ranking if it featured some more Cumberbatch. As it is, he only appears for a few scant minutes as Nick Kaufman, another American cop she ends up working under overseas, although his role is still memorable.

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## 20 **Thor: Ragnarok (2017)**



Cumberbatch only makes a brief appearance here, reprising his lead role from the then-recently-released *Doctor Strange*, but this is predictably mostly the Thor show. Taika Waititi's cinematic take on hammer-wielding god Thor is certainly a fan favorite, but its smug sense of humor and "anything for a laugh" sensibility can become grating, and the

film is bizarrely lacking in the signature balance of humor and humanity Waititi usually brings to the screen. *What We Do in the Shadows*, *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*, and *Jojo Rabbit*.

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19 **Wreckers (2011)**



A remarkably assured debut from British filmmaker Dictynna Hood, *Wreckers* stars Benedict Cumberbatch and Claire Foy as married couple David and Dawn, whose fresh start in the countryside is shaken up by the appearance of David's disturbed younger brother. Old secrets are brought to the light and sibling rivalry rears its head in this tense little thriller guided by Hood's direction and anchored by a phenomenal trio of performances.

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18 **The Courier (2020)**

 Benedict Cumberbatch In The Courier Trailer

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Benedict's latest seems him shedding the cloak and superhero status in a potent reminder of the actor's sheer craft. As British businessman-turned-spy Greville Wynne, he gives a tense, star performance, grounding this old-fashioned tale of spycraft with A-list appeal. Director Dominic Cooke's film isn't likely to become a staple of the genre, but he's wise to eschew globe-trotting setpieces for a more personal story of friendship and loyalty saving the world.

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## 17 Doctor Strange In The Multiverse Of Madness (2022)

 doctor strange speaking to the illuminati in doctor strange in the multiverse of madness

With the MCU's Multiverse Saga the main focus of the cinematic universe, Doctor Strange seemed like the perfect character to explore these other dimensions. *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* finds Strange battling former hero Scarlet Witch as she tries to find her sons out in the multiverse through any means necessary. Cumberbatch falls nicely back into his superhero role but has to contend with a lot to really stand out. From the scene-


stealing new hero America Chavez to the evil Wanda to the controversial cameos, the movie [Link copied to clipboard](#) is certainly a packed blockbuster. While it received a somewhat mixed response, seeing Sam Raimi back directing a superhero movie was a thrill for many fans of the genre.

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## 16 **Spider-Man: No Way Home (2021)**

 Doctor Strange casting a spell in Spider-Man No Way Home

*Spider-Man: No Way Home* would rank higher Cumberbatch's Doctor Strange had played a bigger role in the proceedings. While he was featured heavily in the marketing, and does play an important part in the story, Strange gets sidelined inside the mirror dimension for a large portion of the running time. Still, *Spider-Man: No Way Home* is a great movie, one of the best the MCU has produced, and Cumberbatch is great in it as Strange, the not quite Sorcerer Supreme desperately trying to stop the rest of the multiverse from invading the main MCU world. His interplay with Tom Holland's Peter Parker is also alternately funny and heartbreaking, whenever the situation calls for it, and the two actors play off each other splendidly.

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15 **Avengers: Infinitv War (2018)**

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to Thanos in Avengers: Infinity War

Cumberbatch's Doctor Strange is one of the characters "snapped" by Thanos at the end of the Russo Brothers' bombastic *Infinity War*, which throws nearly every Marvel Cinematic Universe character into the mix and lets them bounce off each other for nearly three hours. Fans are certain to enjoy, despite the film's slightness; with so many characters, there's not enough time with any of them to really focus or care.



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