Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid

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Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid is an interesting example of the western genre. It initially starts out as the epitome of what one would expect from that type of film – dramatic, atmospheric, and sepia tones. While I’m not sure how it marketed itself to audiences at the time, I had no idea it would unravel as it did. It’s narrative seems to be unfolding as a traditional western, and audiences are subjected to a scene in which we anticipate that the Sundance Kid is coercing a women, at gunpoint, into some form of sexual misconduct and likely rape. But as soon as we’re subverted and learn that this was just a silly bit of roleplaying, the film reverses tonally. It more or less becomes a bromantic comedy with some adventure and action. When the title’s namesakes are being hunted down by a mysterious posse, this posse is shown through an absolutely haunting long shot. A conventional western would use this, likely successfully, to create immense tension and serious fear. This film simply used that tension to illustrate hilarious conversations between Butch and Sundance. Butch and Sundance also subverted traditional Western anti-heroes, who are usually quite grim when not violent. Instead, we’re given two lighthearted characters portrayed by two actors with amazing chemistry.