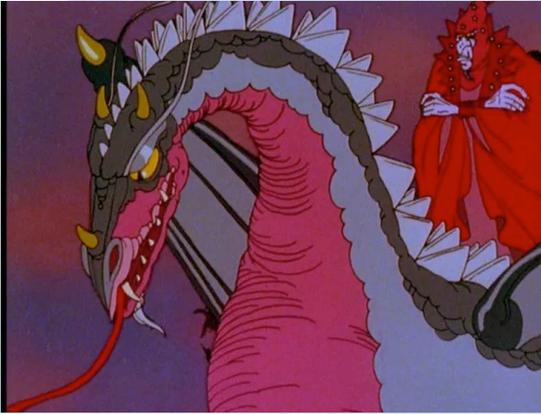


# 10 ANIMATED FANTASY FILMS

By Bryan



## **BEOWULF (2007)** □

After Robert Zemeckis journeyed into the Uncanny Valley of motion capture animation with **The Polar Express**, he found an improved (if still creepy) look for this epic fantasy painting of a movie, with spectacular camera moves, some gore and a smart script by **Pulp Fiction** co-writer Roger Avary and **The Sandman** creator Neil Gaiman. Crispin "George McFly" Glover reunites with the director to bring his trademark weirdness to the monster, Grendel.

## **THE BLACK CAULDRON (1985)** □

A few years before **The Little Mermaid**, when Disney was still trying to figure out what to do post-Walt, they took a big swing with this non-musical and so-scary-it-got-a-PG-rating (gasp) fantasy based on books by Lloyd Alexander. Though considered a flop at the time it holds up well because of its gorgeous background paintings and great animation of skeletons and ghouls.

## **FIRE AND ICE (1983)** □

Ralph Bakshi (whose **Lord of the Rings** could be on this list too) collaborated with the legendary Conan cover painter Frank Frazetta to make this rotoscoped barbarian film. They shot a bunch of people running around with furs and battle axes and then traced them onto animation cels painted up like Frazetta's art.

## **THE FLIGHT OF DRAGONS (1982)** □

Rankin-Bass, who blessed the world with everything from **Heat Miser** to **Thundercats**, also made a series of made-for-TV animated fantasies. **The Hobbit** and **The Return of the King** were followed by this exploration of the magic/science dichotomy. John Ritter voices a Boston writer transported from the '80s to a time of wizards and dragons.

## **KUBO AND THE TWO STRINGS (2016)** □

Laika are the Oregon-based stop motion animation studio that created such classics as **Coraline**, **Paranorman** and **The Boxtrolls**. Arguably their most ambitious and beautiful film so far, **Kubo** is set in feudal Japan and is about witches, magic armor, talking monkeys, music, origami, storytelling and a giant skeleton.



## **THE LAST UNICORN (1982)** □

In the same year as the aforementioned dragon movie, Rankin-Bass went all in on unicorns with this theatrical release boasting a voice cast of Alan Arkin, Jeff Bridges, Mia Farrow, Angela Lansbury and Christopher Lee.

## **LEGEND OF THE GUARDIANS: THE OWLS OF GA'HOOLE (2010)** □

Many have strong opinions about the films of Zack Snyder (**Sucker Punch**, **Man of Steel**), but there's surprisingly little discussion about the fact that he applied his heightened tone and speed-ramping action to a totally straight-faced children's fantasy where photorealistic computer animated owls wear helmets and fight each other. It's like **The Secret of NIMH** meets **300**. If that sounds cool to you, you have to see this movie, because... I mean, I think you understand why.

## **NAUSICÄÄ OF THE VALLEY OF THE WIND (1984)** □

The films of Hayao Miyazaki are rightfully some of the most popular and revered of anything on our shelves. So this is a quick reminder that he made an amazing one set in a **Dune**-like post-apocalyptic world where a princess flies around on a glider trying to stop giant insects from overrunning her kingdom.



## **THE THIEF AND THE COBBLER (1993)** □

There's an engaging history to this incomplete film, which Richard Williams (animation director of **Who Framed Roger Rabbit**) worked on independently over 31 years with many of the best animators who ever lived before it was taken away from him. But even in its bastardized release it's some of the most awe-inspiringly meticulous animation ever drawn by hand, and the villain speaks in rhyme with the voice of Vincent Price.

## **WIZARDS (1977)** □

After having only done X or R rated films in urban settings (**Fritz the Cat**, **Heavy Traffic**), Ralph Bakshi stepped into the fantasy realm with this weird tale of fairies, elves, dwarves and wizards representing magic vs. tech in a post-WWIII wasteland.



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