

# 'Insignificance' 'Stand By Me' head Lieurance's Top 10 Films

By Charles Lieurance  
Senior Reporter

It's that time again when critics and would-be critics fall all over themselves to give movie awards and compile top-10 lists. Whether these lists are supposed to influence the Motion Picture Academy's decisions come March or supplant the need for those illustrious awards is uncertain. I hope eventually to set up award ceremonies in the Cornhusker Hotel for the annual "Charlies." Pipe dream, I suppose.

So here's the first annual Charlies. Dress is casual. Because the directors of these fine films were obligated to other projects, all awards will be accepted by me and forwarded to the stars at my convenience.

**1. "Insignificance"**  
Nicholas Roeg's highly stylized epic style makes David Lynch ("Blue Velvet") and Alex Cox ("Sid and Nancy") look like naive schoolboys. "Insignificance" hangs a treatise on physics, God, sex, death, nuclear holocaust and stardom around the semi-mythical meeting of Albert Einstein and Marilyn Monroe in a posh New York City hotel room. The filmwork is absolutely cosmic in its ability to reveal and surprise, and the message is important on the intimate as well as the universal level.

Nicholas Roeg has finally made a film that doesn't bog down in its pretensions or become too literary for popular consumption. Although "Insignificance" is difficult, it is universally comprehensible.

**2. "Stand By Me"**  
This is a much smaller film than "Insignificance," although the themes are equally important. Taken from a short story by Stephen King, "Stand By Me" is a period piece, one part Southern gothic (four boys in search of another boy's corpse) and one part sensitive, classic *bildungsroman*. The film's light touch and subtlety are absolutely refreshing in a year full of artsy self-indulgence. It proves a masterpiece doesn't have to be dowsed in symbolism, sporadic angst and fragmented film work (see "Blue Velvet").

**3. "Sid and Nancy"**  
Alex "Repo Man" Cox exhumes Sid Vicious and his girlfriend Nancy Spungen for this sickly dance through the heyday of punk, heroin addiction, mutual self-destruction and hellish dead ends. Whether this story is faithful to the myth of Sid and Nancy or not, isn't really the point. Cox is not the sort of director who can resist the hallucinogenic fantasy elements in a story, and his energy as a creative filmmaker often takes him off the documentary path. When Cox and his characters come unhinged from the documented side of the story is when the film works best.

**4. "Little Shop of Horrors"**  
Muppetmaster Frank Oz has breathed life into the Hollywood musical with the help of a madhouse of a cast that

includes Rick Moranis, Steve Martin, Bill Murray, Christopher Guest, Jim Belushi, Vincent Gardenia and the Four Top's Levi Stubbs as the voice of the man-eating plant from outer space. Ellen Greene, the befuddled heroine in love with Moranis but embroiled with Steve Martin, a sadistic dentist, is the highlight, offering guilty pleasure after guilty pleasure in her heart-wrenching songs.

**5. Crimes of the Heart**  
This riotous black comedy that parodies Southern gothic as much as it dwells in that genre, draws over, around and through the Tennessee Williams, Flannery O'Connor, William Faulkner textbook of antebellum ailments. Diane Keaton, Jessica Lange and Sissy Spacek have more skeletons in this closets than dresses and shoes. You got your incest, your suicides, your schizophrenics, your nymphomaniacs, your half-wits, your addicts and your murderers. The seven deadly sins and one or two that are normally considered too deadly to list are revealed one by one by the three sisters in their casual gossip and late night giggles. Between every "I declare" and "Y'all" there's a ferociously funny revelation.

**6. "Brazil"**  
Terry Gilliam's fantasy/adventure/comedy/science-fiction epic about nothing and everything was the kind of remarkable thing that film should be. Like a child given a camera, Gilliam is primarily excited by how the image looks. Like the earliest moving pictures and the film fantasies of Cocteau, "Brazil" restates brilliantly that the

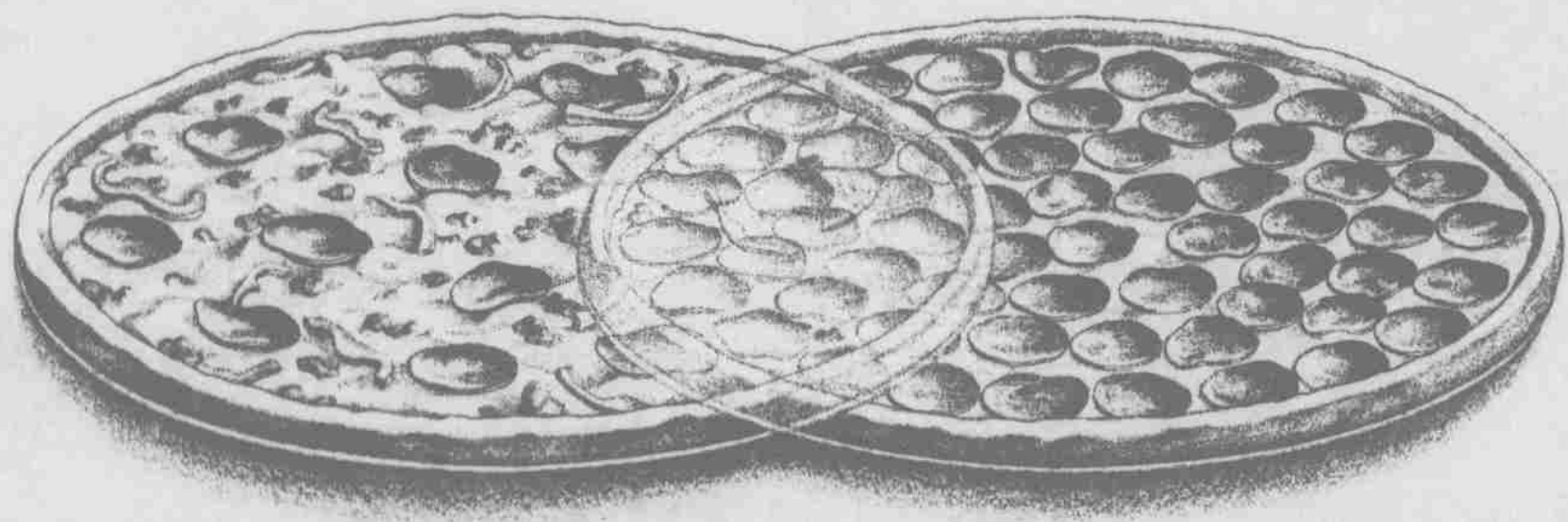
medium is a miracle, capable of anything. Although this film would be annoying to anyone who couldn't stand a tangent here and there, there are so many miracles along the way that almost any digression is forgivable.

**7. "Hail Mary"**  
Although I'm not sure if this is a comedy or not, I'm willing to recommend it either way. As a parody of the nativity, this is a blast in places. Mary's a foul-mouthed street kid who's fixated with genitalia and who treats her sudden holiness like any teenager who has suddenly discovered she's worth a lot more than she every thought she was. The messenger angel is a gangster. As a mystical meditation on the nativity the film is a little less interesting, but it still works if you have enough arcane knowledge at your fingertips. It's as annoyingly obtuse as most Godard films, but at least the central plot is familiar enough to give the audience a reliable point of departure.

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