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Running In The Movies

There are not many movies out there that have the characters running for a reason. Therefore, when one comes along, we usually greet it with much enthusiasm...

Here are some of the most memorable movies which contain some running elements:

1) Forrest Gump

This has to be the grand-daddy of movies with a strong running element. From the start we've had Forrest putting speedwork into his training program by out-running the neighbourhood bullies and later on in the high-school football team.

When found himself in stressful times (unrequited love), he embarked on a run that would put most ultra-marathoners to shame. With nothing more than his shirt, pants and Nikes, and I presume some money (how else to explain his change of clothes?), he ran across the US continent, creating a whole craze of running (for simply no reason at all) and landing himself up on the cover of Runner's World magazine, no less!

2) George of The Jungle

OK. I know you're giving me that look but after re-watching this comedy, you'll realize that George, like Forrest before him, also ran some back-to-back ultras across the savannahs of Africa to rescue his ape-brother. After couriering himself from the US courtesy of UPS, he put on his black Nike (again! Must be some product placement arrangement Nike has with Hollywood) basketball shoes and did some amazing cross-country leg work. The movie however didn't say whether George came down with a bad case of shin-splints from not breaking in his shoes first, after his monumental mileage effort. We're also not sure if he carbo-loaded on the plentiful bananas.

3) Without Limits

This is an out and out running movie about the short but prodigious life of arguably the most precocious distance runner to come out from America - Steve Prefontaine.

Capturing most of Pre's landmark achievements, from being talent scouted by Bill Bowerman to his heartbreaking Munich Olympics 4th Placing run, the story stayed mostly true to actual events, thanks to Kenny Moore being one of the movie consultants. Frank Shorter had a cameo as a TV Reporter while the director has the good sense to pick actual runners to portray Pre's on-screen challengers. This movie is a must watch for its unceasing inspiring moments. Credits too to Billy Crudup for his faithful turn of Pre, right down to the running style.



Tom Hanks reportedly included training runs as part of his role preps



Actual photo of the Munich 10,000. Viren (226) leading Pre (1005)

4) The Marathon Man

This complex thriller which starred Dustin Hoffman as Babe Levy, a distance runner fighting a haunting past, unwittingly caught up in a web of espionage is often remembered for the torture scene rather than the sight of Hoffman logging miles (even if only for awhile) around a reservoir park in New York. Despite that minor element, this movie is still a must watch if not for the gripping story, for the title alone.

5) Running on The Sun

With a tag line like "40 People, 60 hours, 125 Degrees, Harsh Wind, Sandstorm, Dehydration....", it's hard not to notice this DVD. Rated as "Recommended" by DVDTalk.com, this is not a movie per se but a documentary of the 1999 Badwater Ultra Marathon. If you have a fetish for blisters, this feature is a must-watch.



6) Lord of The Rings: Two Towers

Without air cushioning, Gatorade and PowerGels, blessed with an ideal combination of slow and fast twitch leg muscles, Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli's multi-terrain trek (across hostile territories, no less) put Forrest's roadtrip a Hobbit's play. The Super Trio even had extra energy to take out hordes of Uruk-Hai's and Orcs foolish enough to disrupt their 'workout'. Nike would've signed them up on a snap.

7) Black Hawk Down

Ridley Scott's action packed account of the true urban battle contains so many scenes of death and carnage that it is easy to overlook the final act of the American soldiers making the run back to the safety of the base stadium without the cover of the UThe route taken by the soldiers are now famously known as the Mogadishu Mile. No soldiers died along the way which was amazing given the fact that they were under enemy fire and running in their battle gear.

8) Run Lola Run

This German indie movie was a hit overseas but saw limited interest locally. In a nutshell, the protagonist, Lola, had to fight against time to save her boyfriend from being killed. She had 20 minutes to retrieve a bag of money before the boyfriend's hood boss comes to collect it.

The movie takes place in Berlin and time being of essence, Lola can't be caught Gallowalking. So expect plenty of sprinting and jumping around. This takes running under pressure to a new level.



Lola "cutting thru" a sea of nuns!

The journey continues...

Jamie Pang

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