

10 Best Helen Hunt Movies, Ranked



By [Andrea M. Ciriaco](#) — Aug 18, 2024, 3:36 PM EDT

Helen Hunt is an award-winning actress and director who established herself on the silver screen with popular films like *Twisters*, *As Good As It Gets*, and *Pay It Forward*. Born in Culver City, California, Hunt started acting as a child, appearing on hit television shows including *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *The Facts of Life*, and earning minor film roles. In 1984, she earned her first major film role in the science-fiction movie, *Trancers*, and continued to appear in films throughout the decade, including *Peggy Sue Got Married*, *Project X*, and *Stealing Home*.

By the 1990s, Hunt landed a leading role in the successful sitcom, *Mad About You*, co-starring **Paul Reiser**, making her a household name and leading the actress to bigger film roles. In 1997, Hunt starred in the box office hit, *As Good As It Gets*, earning her the Academy Award for Best Actress. Today, Hunt continues to work in

front and behind the camera, and out of her impressive list of filmography, several noteworthy titles stand out as some of her finest performances.

11

'The Sessions' (2012)

Directed by Ben Lewin



Based on a true story, *The Sessions* is a unique film that features compelling themes about love, loss, and compassion for others that genuinely tugs at the heartstrings. The film follows a poet, Mark O'Brien (John Hawkes) who is paralyzed as a result of polio and is forced to live in an iron lung. As O'Brien realizes he may be

close to death, he decides he wants to lose his virginity and hires a professional sex surrogate, Cheryl Cohen-Greene, played by Hunt.

The film is based on the 1990 article, *On Seeing a Sex Surrogate*, written by O'Brien, and also stars **William H. Macy**, **Rhea Perlman**, and **Adam Arkin**. *The Sessions* premiered at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival and was a breakout hit, earning rave reviews from audiences and critics, noting the phenomenal performances and the film's wholesome message about remembering to live life to the fullest.

The Sessions

R

Comedy

Documentary

Drama

Romance

Release Date

May 2, 2012

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Cast

John Hawkes, Helen Hunt, William H. Macy, Moon Bloodgood, Annika Marks, Adam Arkin

Runtime

95

Director

Ben Lewin

Main Genre

Comedy

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'What Women Want' (2000)

Directed by Nancy Meyers



Mel Gibson stars as a chauvinistic advertising executive and womanizer, Nick Marshall, who retains the ability to read women's thoughts. While his new gift is both a blessing and a curse, he decides to use it to gain inside knowledge about his company's recent hire, Darcy Maguire (Hunt), with the intention of getting her fired, but when he starts to fall in love with her, he starts to have second thoughts about his secret agenda.

What Women Want is a hilarious battle of the sexes fantasy rom-com, which also stars **Alan Alda**, **Marisa Tomei**, and **Sarah Paulson**. **Gibson and Hunt are a top-notch on-screen pair who deliver an equal balance of comedy and romance that doesn't feel forced, having a similar dynamic to screwball couples like Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy.** Even though *What Women Want* earned mixed reviews, it became the fourth highest-grossing film of 2000 and features one of Hunt's all-time best comedic performances.

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'Soul Surfer' (2011)

Directed by Sean McNamara



Hunt stars with **Dennis Quaid** as Cheri and Tom Hamilton, who are the parents of a young competitive surfer, Bethany (**AnnaSophia Robb**), who is a naturally gifted athlete with the potential to go all the way. When Bethany loses one of her arms after being attacked by a shark, she starts to believe she'll never be able to surf again, but with the encouragement and unwavering support of her parents and friends, she becomes determined to ride the waves again.

Soul Surfer is based on the 2004 memoir ***Soul Surfer: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Fighting to Get Back on the Board***, written by Bethany Hamilton, who overcame tremendous odds and became a major inspiration to many around the world. The film received mixed reviews, but **a majority of critics agreed that the film had a heartfelt message and praised the overall cast's performances as convincing and sentimental.**

Soul Surfer

PG

Family

Drama

Release Date

April 8, 2011

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Cast

Helen Hunt, AnnaSophia Robb, Dennis Quaid, Carrie Underwood, Kevin Sorbo, Ross Thomas, Chris Brochu, Lorraine Nicholson, Jeremy Sumpter, Sonya Balmores, Craig T. Nelson, Cody Gomes, Branscombe Richmond, Titus Kinimaka, John Philbin, Tahini Bartolome, Bridget Tully, Tiffany Hofstetter, Kelly Crean, Dylan Slater, Annie Gerstenberger, Sean McNamara, Yasmin Dar, Christie Brooke, Cayla Moore

Runtime

112 minutes

Director

Sean McNamara

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'I See You' (2019)

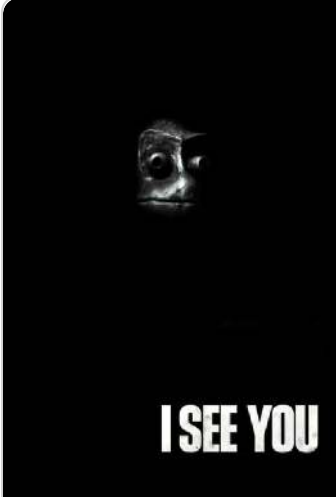
Directed by Adam Randall



A wife and mother, Jackie Harper (Hunt), is trying to save her marriage with her husband and detective, Greg (**Jon Tenney**), and also repair her relationship with their son, Connor (**Judah Lewis**), after having an affair. While the family is trying to resolve their issues and move past things, a little boy goes missing in their town. As Greg investigates the boy's disappearance, the Harpers begin to experience strange occurrences around their home, igniting paranoia and suspicion within their family unit.

***I See You* is a twisted psychological thriller that tells a story within a story** that will leave viewers jaw-dropped. **Hunt delivers one of her best performances in recent**

years, portraying a remorseful mother and wife at her wit's ends before her entire world is shattered beyond repair. *I See You* is one of those films that will have audiences watching at least more than once as it leaves a subtle breadcrumb trail to a sinister reveal that no one ever saw coming.



I See You

RHorrorThrillerMystery

Release Date
December 6, 2019

Runtime
98 minutes

Director
Adam Randall

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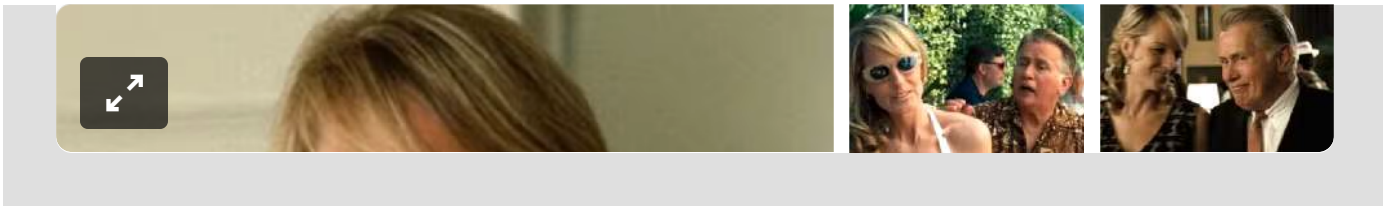
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7

'Bobby' (2006)

Directed by Emilio Estevez





Bobby is an American drama that features an ensemble cast and follows the lives of several individuals and the events leading up to the shocking assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. While the world is stunned by the loss of another Kennedy, those at the hotel all find themselves connected by the senseless tragedy that has a significant impact on each one of them in some sense or another.

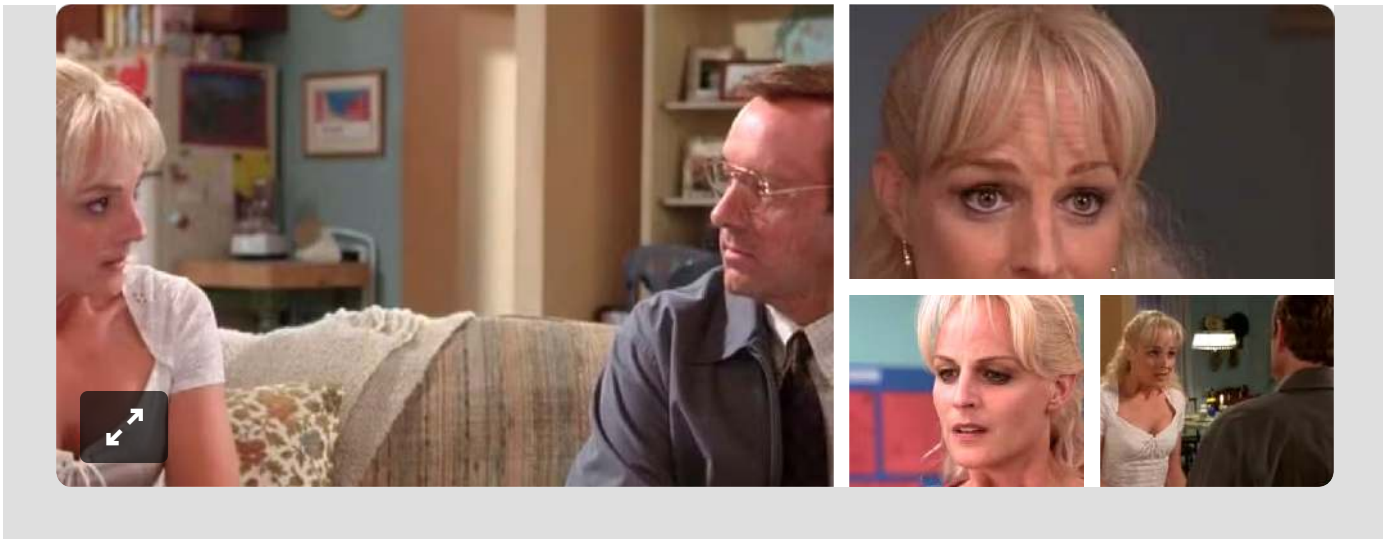
Directed by **Emilio Estevez**, *Bobby* is a fictionalized telling of the hours leading up to the younger Kennedy's assassination and features an all-star cast of players including **Martin Sheen**, **Sharon Stone**, and **Anthony Hopkins**. **Hunt gives a stellar performance as the wife of a wealthy socialite, played by Sheen, who, together, are both the classic bickering but loving married couple** who are completely shell-shocked by the tragic event which also serves as a reality check for the high society pair. *Bobby* wasn't a huge success, but critics credited Estevez for his intentions, the individual performances, and the film's similar story structure to the classic film, *Grand Hotel*.

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6

'Pay It Forward' (2000)

Directed by Mimi Leder



When a social studies teacher, Eugene Simonet (**Kevin Spacey**), assigns his class to come up with an idea that would make the world a better place, one of his students, Trevor (**Haley Joel-Osment**) creates a plan of how to pay it forward to others with favors and acts of kindness. As Trevor's plan begins to affect those around him, including his mother, Arlene (Hunt), he proves how much of an impact one person can have through a single gesture.

Pay It Forward is a romantic drama and an adaptation of the 1999 book by the same name written by **Catherine Ryan Hyde**. Unfortunately, the movie was a disappointment at the box office, but despite barely turning a profit, *Pay It Forward* still earned some kind words from critics such as **Roger Ebert**, who raved about the performances, adding his genuine connection to the characters and believing wholeheartedly in each of them.

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5

'Cast Away' (2000)

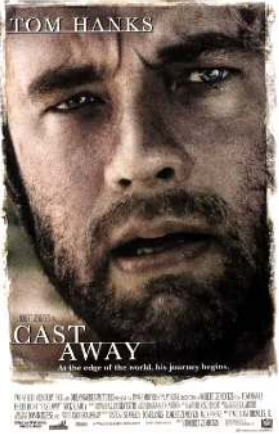
Directed by Robert Zemeckis

Image via 20th Century Studios



Tom Hanks stars in the survival drama, ***Cast Away***, as a FedEx systems analyst, Chuck Noland, who, after his plane crashes into the Pacific Ocean, is stranded alone on a deserted island. As the days turn into months and months turn into years, Noland starts to believe that he will never be rescued, but continues to try and hold out hope that he will return home and to his girlfriend, Kelly (Hunt), who he had intended on proposing to after his ill-fated trip.

While Hanks essentially carries *Cast Away* as a one-man show, Hunt delivers a heartbreaking performance that is highly marginalized. As Noland returns home, he learns that Kelly has married and started a family of his own and while it is devastating, the two have a reunion that is both bittersweet and endearing, presenting the age-old question: what if? **Even though Hunt doesn't have a ton of screen time in *Cast Away*, she and Hanks have an uncanny chemistry and their torrid romance just adds another somber layer to the film's overall tone.**



Cast Away

PG-13

Adventure

Drama

Release Date
December 22, 2000

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'Peggy Sue Got Married' (1986)

Directed by Francis Ford Coppola



When Peggy Sue Bodell (**Kathleen Turner**) attends her twenty-fifth high school reunion with her daughter (Hunt), she begins to question her life choices and regrets settling down with her now ex-husband, Charlie (**Nicolas Cage**), who she recently left. While at the reunion, Bodell faints, and when she wakes up, she discovers that she has traveled back in time to 1960 and is back in high school. While Bodell takes the opportunity to do things differently, she soon realizes that some choices are more complicated to make than she expected, forcing her to come to terms with her true feelings about Charlie and her current life.

Hunt appeared in one of her first major film roles in **Francis Ford Coppola's** *Peggy Sue Got Married* as Bodell's daughter, Beth. The film earned overall positive reviews and received three Academy Award nominations for Best Costume Design, Best Cinematography, and Best Actress in a Leading Role for **Turner's fantastic performance**. While Hunt plays a minor but crucial role, *Peggy Sue Got Married* was monumental for her film career, helping to establish herself with American audiences and ultimately leading to her height of popularity during the 1990s.



Peggy Sue Got Married

PG-13

Comedy

Drama

Fantasy

Release Date

October 10, 1986

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3

'Twister' (1996)

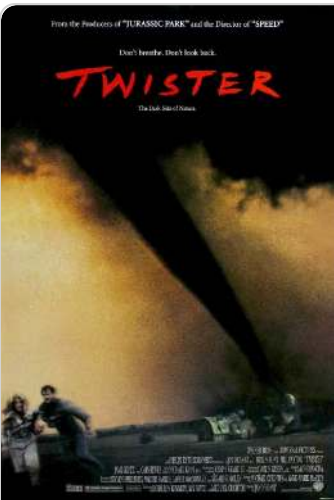
Directed by Jan de Bont



In the 90s **disaster film, *Twister***, Hunt stars as a professor, Dr. Jo Harding, who, with the help of her students, builds a prototype of a groundbreaking device that is designed to gather data from tornadoes, which was initially conceived by Harding's estranged husband and former storm chaser, Bill (**Bill Paxton**). When a series of record-breaking tornadoes are set to touch down in Oklahoma, Harding convinces

Bill to join her and her team for the historical moment of testing out his device known as Dorothy.

Twister features an epic line-up of stars including **Cary Elwes**, **Philip Seymour Hoffman**, and **Alan Ruck**, and received generally positive reviews. **The film is credited as a pivotal role in Hunt's film career and was one of several films that cemented her status as a box office draw.** *Twister* became the second highest-grossing film of 1996 and earned two Academy Award nominations for Best Sound and Best Visual Effects.



Twister

PG-13

Adventure

Action

Drama

Release Date

May 10, 1996

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2



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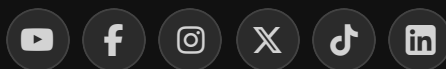


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