

Stand by Me (1986) Reiner

P Michell, 2022

About four teenage boys setting out to find a boy that is missing and presumed dead in a small town named Castle Rock. They hope that, if they find the boy, they will become famous. The film is about the adventure of the journey, but more importantly it shows how young boys cope with the difficulties of growing up in a small town with little hope for a successful future. Though each of them have much different personalities and traits they all had somewhat abusive and difficult backgrounds. Gordie is the mature member of the group that likes to write and tell stories, but his father preferred his brother, who is now dead. Vern is overweight and gets picked on, especially by his brother and his friends. Chris comes from a family of alcoholics and criminals, but he is much different from the rest of his family. Teddy is fearless and has emotional issues due to an abusive father.
(<https://standbybeason.weebly.com/analysis.html>)

Creative Personnel

Rob Reiner – Director (27 credits) / Actor [80 credits – nil in SBM]

First three films – This is Spinal Tap, SBM & Princess Bride. All very successful then established Castle Rock entertainment company (with others) in 1987.

Son of Carl Reiner who created and starred in ‘Dick Van Dyke Show’ on TV.

Made some good films inc When Harry Met Sally (1989) and not so good ones.

Stand by Me (1986) was a unique directing experience because ideas came from everywhere. Doing a period piece about the world of childhood is an adventure, each day on-set; people from the crew threw their own childhood memories into the production.

Considered this his masterpiece and the best film he has ever made.

Rob Reiner's follow up film, Princess Bride features Fred Savage. Savage would later star on Wonder Years - a nostalgic coming of age TV show narrated by the main character's voiceover. Princess Bride also stars occasional actor Many Patinkin – more famous as Broadway singer! Many famous scenes inc sword fight with allusions to Errol Flynn’s Robin Hood.

Reiner is known as a political activist, co-founding the American Foundation For Equal Rights, a group that was an advisory for same-sex-marriage. He has spoken at several rallies on several topics, an advocate for social change regarding such issues as domestic violence and tobacco use.

Co-wrote the 1st episode of Happy Days (1974).

Was close Friend of Richard Dreyfus.

Stephen King / novella (340 credits !)

Prolific writer inc Shawshank Redemption.

Breakout with Carrie (1973) after his wife found crumpled MSS. Always writing for small journals inc men’s magazines. Left his teaching job at \$6400 after getting at least \$200,000 for Carrie ... and the rest is history!

He created the fictional town of Castle Rock where many of his stories are set.

Thomas del Ruth - Cinematography (77 credits)

Son of Roy del Ruth – film producer / director. Father has star on Hollywood Blvd. was one of the highest paid directors during 1930s and 1940s.

James Cagney was his godfather. Started work in Walt Disney's Mail & Message Dept. Mostly made TV films and series in The West Wing.

Will Wheaton – Gordie (137 credits)

Aged 14 when made film. After his success in SBM went on to make Star Trek: Next generation.

River Phoenix - Chris (26 credits)

Also aged 14 at the time. Sadly died in 1993. Known for a number of films inc My Own Private Idaho (1991), Mosquito Coast (1986). Highly regarded actor. Number of his siblings became actors inc Joaquin, Rain and Summer. Hated flying, would travel by car or train. Apocryphal last words as he exited the Viper Room – *No paparazzi, I want anonymity.*

Corey Feldman - Teddy (133 credits)

Aged fifteen. Long career beginning as seven year old. Notable films inc Gremlins (1984), Goonies (1985), and The Lost Boys (1987) with Keifer Sutherland. Starred in horror films including a couple of Friday the 13th follow ups. Divorced his parents. Part of a band that tours. Took 'time out' in the nineties.

Jerry O'Connell – Vern (127 credits)

Aged twelve. First film. Mostly TV work.

Keifer Sutherland – Ace (103 credits)

Son of Donald Sutherland. Traveled in rodeo circuitis. Plays ice hockey (grew up in Canada). Computer illiterate. Noted for Lost Boys (1987), and TV series 24.

During filming of [Stand by Me](#) (1986), he stayed in character off-camera by often picking on [Wil Wheaton](#), [River Phoenix](#), [Corey Feldman](#) and [Jerry O'Connell](#).

Owns Ironworks Studio together with his musical partner singer/songwriter/composer [Jude Cole](#). Kiefer also owns a valuable collection of about 50 vintage guitars which he and his partners has been playing in studio sessions and live performances.

When you're a young actor you like to go for characters with a bit of flair, so in many films I ended up playing the weirdos. But I can assure you I'm not a psycho or a criminal or a bully. If the acting thing hadn't worked out for me, I'd be laying phone cable in northern Ontario. Twelve years ago, if anyone had suggested I would do TV, I would have laughed at them. Film actors didn't do TV. But when I was finally offered [24](#) (2001), it came like a saving grace. I owe it a lot.

Trivia

The film takes place from September 4 to September 6, 1959 and in September 1985.

After director [Rob Reiner](#) screened the movie for [Stephen King](#), he noticed that King was visibly shaking and wasn't speaking. He left the room and upon his return, told Reiner that the movie was the best adaptation of his work he had ever seen.

At the insistence of director [Rob Reiner](#) (an avid non-smoker who campaigned for anti-smoking laws in California), the cigarettes smoked by the boys were made from lettuce leaves.

The film's success resulted in renewed interest in the [Ben E. King](#) song, which inspired the title used in the movie and is featured on the soundtrack. King's version of the song was originally released in 1961, and was re-released at the time of the film. The re-release would reach the Top Ten, peaking at #9 in the fall of 1986.

The late [Michael Jackson](#) was asked to do a cover of the late [Ben E. King](#)'s song, "Stand by Me," for the movie; [Rob Reiner](#), in the end, thought the original version better suited the movie.

Columbia Pictures, concerned that the original title, "The Body", was misleading, renamed the film "Stand by Me". According to screenwriter [Raynold Gideon](#), ". . . it sounded like either a sex film, a bodybuilding film or another [Stephen King](#) horror film. [Rob Reiner](#) came up with 'Stand by Me' [after the [Ben E. King](#) song], and it ended up being the least unpopular option."

Coca-Cola bought Embassy Pictures, the film's original production company, and announced it wasn't going to fund the film just two days before production was to begin. [Norman Lear](#) *, who had worked with [Rob Reiner](#) for years on [All in the Family](#) (1971), was one of the three owners of Embassy prior to its sale. He believed in the project enough that he agreed to personally foot the film's \$8 million budget. [Paul's footnote – Lear is one of the major personalities in US TV production in 1960s and 1970s.]

The four main actors met [Rob Reiner](#) and some of the crew in an Oregon hotel suite in June of 1985 to perform games based on [Viola Spolin](#)'s Improvisation for the Theater to develop trust in one another. The actors did things like mirror each other and talk each other through traversing the hotel lobby while blindfolded.

Analysis

<https://standbybeason.weebly.com/analysis.html>

Stand by Me is one of the best coming of age films I have seen. The story is about four teenage boys setting out to find a boy that is missing and presumed dead in a small town named Castle Rock. They hope that, if they find the boy, they will become famous. The film is about the adventure of the journey, but more importantly it shows how young boys cope with the difficulties of growing up in a small town with little hope for a successful future. The boys were from the same small town, and though each of them had much different personalities and traits they all had somewhat abusive and difficult backgrounds. Gordie is the mature member of the group that likes to write and tell stories, but his father preferred his brother, who is now dead. Vern is overweight and gets picked on, especially by his brother and his friends. Chris comes from a family of alcoholics and criminals, but he is much different from the rest of his family. Teddy is fearless and has emotional issues due to an abusive father.

The boys encounter several obstacles during their journey such as, being caught on a bridge with a train heading towards them, being chased by a dog, walking through a river and getting leeches all over them. After each experience the boys grow closer and start opening up about their fears and also their hopes. One thing for sure is that after each experience they decide they won't turn back and they start feeling confident that they can overcome any obstacle. Listening to the boys open up and tell stories was funny, and sometimes sad, but it made them closer.

Ultimately they find the dead boy, but Vern's brothers and his friends try to take credit and this is when Gordie takes the lead and pulls the gun on the older boys. This is a turning point for Gordie and the other boys are very surprised at what he did, but it was his opportunity to show he could stand up to others. The boys then return to Castle Rock and anonymously call the police, and go their separate ways. A trip that lasted only a few days seemed to make the boys mature by years.

The film then tells the future of each of the boys. Vern married right out of high school and became a forklift driver, Teddy ended up in jail, and Chris did become a lawyer but was stabbed to death trying to help someone.

The film does a great job in showing the difficulties that boys face growing up, especially when coming from difficult backgrounds. It's through each experience that I believe all of us can relate to, that makes it interesting. I found that during each experience I would question myself on how I would handle it, and compare it to how the boys actually handled it.

In the end you root for the boys, since they are underdogs and you hope they all become successful and are able to make it out of the small town. However, just like in real life that's usually not how it happens and in *Stand by Me* only one of the boys, Gordie, actually made it out of town. A great film due to the different characters, the adventure, the music, and the hope that the boys will become successful.

Reviews

Death at an Early Age

[wes-connors](#), 2009 [Imdb.com]

"In a small woodsy Oregon town, a group of friends - sensitive Gordie (Wil Wheaton), tough guy Chris (River Phoenix), flamboyant Teddy (Corey Feldman), and scaredy-cat Vern (Jerry O'Connell) - are in search of a missing teenager's body. Wanting to be heroes in each other's, and their hometown's eyes, they set out on an unforgettable two-day trek that turns into an odyssey of self-discovery. They sneak smokes, tell tall tales, cuss 'cause it's cool, and band together when the going gets tough.

"When they encounter the town's knife-wielding hoods, who are also after the body, the boys discover a strength they never knew they had. 'Stand By Me' is a rare and special film about friendship and the indelible experiences of growing up. Filled with humor and suspense, it is based on the novella 'The Body' by Stephen King," according to the DVD sleeve description. The adaptation, by Raynold Gideon and Bruce A. Evans, is one of the best treatments of an original Stephen King story.

Twelve-year-old kids from the 1950s were a lot more mature than I could imagine□

Nevertheless, Rob Reiner orchestrates the film beautifully, recapturing feelings that die when puberty begins taking its toll. The four lads from the fifties are played by four young actors from the eighties, but the attitudes and feelings are timeless. This isn't a horror film, but it is all about death□ dead cars in a junkyard, death-threatening trains, leeches in a swamp, the dead body at the end of the boys' quest... The protagonist's dead brother haunts the film. And, most of all, "Stand by Me" wistfully recalls the death of childhood.

STAND BY ME (1986): A Nostalgic Story Of Friendship
LUCA ARFINI, 2016 [FILMINQUIRY.COM]

Stand By Me is one of my favorite movies, I could watch it a hundred times without getting bored. I have watched it in different phases of my life, through various perspectives. Every time I watch it, I learn a new detail that I had not noticed the before. After the end of the movie, I always feel a sad sense of nostalgia.

When I think about *Stand by Me*, I think about a story of friendship, a reflection of who our friends are and how they affect our lives. I truly believe in the saying “who finds a friend, finds a treasure” and I think this movie draws a perfect picture of the carefree friendship that you can have when you are a teenager. Curiously, it’s based on a **Stephen King** novel, who is famous for his scary bestsellers such as *The Shining*. This movie, directed by **Rob Reiner** in 1986, is anything but frightening.

The film starts with a narrator telling a story, recalling a past event. It’s about that phase of life in which one feels at the end of his childhood, ready to become a young adult. It is the last adventure lived without stopping to think about the risks and the dangers, with only the burning desire to live it. The film takes place in Castle Rock, a small town in Oregon, and it is the warm summer of 1959. Four boys, close to the beginning of high school, decide to follow the train tracks, looking for the dead body of a brother.

THE BOYS

The protagonist is Gordie Lachance, (played by **Will Wheaton**, while the adult Gordie is played by **Richard Dreyfuss**), who is also the narrator of the story. He is a shy boy who has a bad relationship with his parents. They have just been shocked by the death of their eldest son, the family favorite, and Gordie too always admired him. Gordie is a smart and talented writer, but his only reader and fan is his best friend Chris Chambers (played by a very young **River Phoenix**).

In an interview, director **Rob Reiner** explained that he wanted to focus more on Gordie, to change the “observer” role he has in King’s book, and **Reiner** chose to make him the main character. Gordie is the shy guy surmounted by doubts. He doesn’t see himself as a winner like his brother, and he is sad for the lack of parental affection. Through the help of his friend, he becomes more confident and will eventually become a successful writer.

Chris is the leader of their group, he is a brilliant and sensible guy, but his surname carries a bad reputation he has to overcome; his father and brother are known for their poor and criminal behavior. Chris and Gordie are the most significant characters in the film, their behavior and personalities are focused on most throughout the story. The two remaining members of the group are Teddy Duchamp and Vern Tessio. Vern is a chubby and funny guy, (played by **Jerry O'Connell**); he is not very smart, and is the goofy one of the four. Teddy (played by **Corey Feldman**), is an eccentric guy that has a crazy and violent father, whom he still considers his biggest hero anyway.

LIFE IS A CHALLENGE WHEN YOU'RE GROWING UP

It isn't difficult to catch the metaphor of the movie and understand that the path that the four protagonists have to cross, with all its obstacles. For example, the small lake full of leeches or the risk of getting crushed under a train, avoided only barely, represents the hitches of growing up and of reaching that adult awareness. Even though *Stand By Me* takes place in the 1950s, and the differences between teenagers growing up then and now are clear, teenagers then and now still experience that confusion during puberty and the importance of the friends in our lives that *Stand By Me* presents, is something timeless.

The great performances are one of the main elements of *Stand By Me* that made me fall in love with it. The dramatic moments are performed with the right passion, which make these scenes very vivid. For instance, the scene when Chris bursts into tears after he confessed to Gordie about a past incident where he was unfairly coined a thief, or when Gordie takes the gun and pulls it on the band of bad guys that want to steal the dead body and claim all the glory for finding it.

As I said before, this is a very different film from all the others inspired by **Stephen King** novels. The dark comedy, the mystery, the gore and the gloomy atmosphere, are replaced with the nostalgic memories of King's childhood, told through the expert direction of **Reiner** and played by a group of very young but talented kids.

A ROMANTIC POPULAR SOUNDTRACK

The movie was shot between June and August of 1985, and in 1987, it won the Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay. Technically, the film is great as well: great attention was given to every single detail and nothing was left to chance. Every shot is carefully chosen always to show a landscape, the expression of a face or a train looming at their heels, in the best way possible.

This is completed with the excellent set design by **Reynolds Gideon** and the cinematography by **Thomas Del Ruth**. One of the most striking scenes, the meeting of Gordie with the deer, has such a perfect frame to make that moment special remove for the spectator. For the soundtrack, the director wanted to use all his favorite songs from 1959, the year in which the film is set.

Stand By Me is also the title of the famous song that inspired the title of the movie. Indeed, the **Stephen King** novel is titled *The Body* and this title wouldn't work for movie; it would make the impression to be just another Stephen King horror story, which it clearly isn't. "Stand By Me", the song by **Ben E. King**, reached the top five of the US ranking in 1961.

It's a much beloved song, with its sad but romantic notes, perfect for the atmosphere of the movie.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I suggest you watch the movie if you haven't yet, or to watch it again, so you will be able to catch all the great small details of the story and the setting and to dive again into this great teenage adventure.

You will be brought back to the age when all is possible; you will feel part of the group of these four boys and their great journey. You will grow up with them, reaching the end of the movie with this sense of sadness, nostalgia, and invincibility.

Do you believe in long-lasting friendship?