

# I Believe I Can Fly! My Five Favorite Flying Scenes

Ask just about any kid what superpower they want most and they will choose the ability to fly. Ask any adult the same question and you will likely get the same answer. There is something wonderfully appealing about being able to fly. It's why we took to the skies over 100 years ago. Movies have frequently attempted to capture the joy and excitement of flying. From *Star Wars* and its space battles to *Top Gun* and its over-the-top male bonding in the sky, movies have done their best to help us experience what it feels like to go airborne.

Below, you will read (and see[1. All video clips are courtesy of the respective studios...Don't sue us we aren't making any money off of them!]) my five favorite flying scenes. A few disclaimers and honorable mentions before we get to the main list. First, I have not included any of the more "realistic" flying scenes – scenes where people are piloting airplanes or jets. Those can be fun but I think they mute a lot of the excitement we long for as children. Most kids want to fly, not fly in something. Second, as it will become more obvious below, I am drawn to scenes where the music and the mood capture me as much as what I am seeing on screen. Finally, I may have cheated a little on a few of these and violated my first point above. You'll see what I mean below.

Honorable mentions:

1. ***Iron Man*** – the first time Tony Stark flies in the Iron Man suit. It's a fun, well executed scene.
2. ***Avatar*** – Neytiri goes flying on an Ikran. If *Avatar* excelled at anything, it was the visuals and James Cameron holds nothing back for this sequence. Seeing this in 3D was

spectacular filmmaking.

3. ***The Neverending Story*** – Atreyu and Falcor fly over Fantasia. I have loved this movie since I was a child. The effects in this scene don't hold up to today's standards, but man did they transport me to a new world when I first saw this film.

With all that said, here are my five favorites in no particular order.

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### ***Toy Story* – Woody and Buzz fall with style**

This scene is a perfect summation as to why *Pixar* films are so good. It's the climax of the film and the filmmakers could have simply used that as an excuse to end the film with something huge. And in a way, it does end big, but everything that happens in this sequence happens to further develop the story and the characters. Buzz Lightyear and Woody have been butting heads since the moment they met. Buzz won the other toys over with his incredible "flying" demonstration early in the film. Yet, by the end of the film, he has come to terms with the fact that he is a toy and cannot fly. So what does *Pixar* do? It has Woody and Buzz working together to literally fly to the moving truck – and beyond. It's action and excitement in service of the story and the characters. That is great filmmaking and it's why *Toy Story*, and many other *Pixar* films, are so beloved all these years later.

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### ***Superman Returns* – Superman saves the day**

I realize that this film has been lost in the craze and popularity of the recent *Marvel* films. That's a shame because Bryan Singer made a really good Superman film. This film serves as a sequel of sorts to *Superman II* – the one from the 80s. Superman has been gone from earth for five years. He left to see if he could find any signs of an intact Krypton. He returns to find that many people in the world, Lois Lane included, have moved on. This scene is his reintroduction to the world. For my money, this is the first time a film was truly able to capture Superman's power, speed, and ability. The entire airplane rescue sequence is intricately constructed – with new obstacles popping up every few seconds. Besides the fantastic visuals, the music plays a vital role as well. Composer John Ottman did what most composers do not seem capable of doing: He checked his ego at the door and willingly weaved portions of John Williams' classic *Superman* score with his own original score. You can hear the opening notes of the triumphant Williams *Superman* theme at the very end of the clip. The full theme is heard multiple times throughout the movie and that, coupled with Ottman's original score, make for an awesome pairing.

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### ***E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* – Flying bikes**

Speilberg was working on a level most other filmmakers only dream of when he made *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*. It's one of my 10 favorite films and the climax is a big reason why. There is a sense of wonder and joy during the final chase – then flight – sequence it's almost palpable. It's perfectly staged by building up the tension a little at a time until you feel that something just has to give. And then the boys take flight on their bikes! I get chills every time I see it.

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## ***Peter Pan – Wendy learns how to fly***

I hate that this film seemingly got ignored when it released back in 2003. In a perfect world, this would be the definitive film version of this story. What draws me to this sequence—besides the pure joy and excitement demonstrated by the kids, and the impossibly chaotic and beautiful child imagined solar system—is the music. Again, if the music works for me, the film has a great chance to become a favorite. My reaction to this musical theme by James Newton Howard is hard for me to really explain. It hits me deep. It builds, it plays a bit, and then it explodes into the grand rendition of the Neverland theme. I saw this in a mostly empty theater when it came out and I was floored. There must have been dust in the air or something because my eyes were all manner of watery.

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## ***How to Train Your Dragon – Hiccup and Toothless's first flight***

Childlike wonder. That is all that really needs to be said about this sequence and this film. I enjoyed this film the first time I saw it. I liked the world, the story, and the music. Then my middle son fell in love with it. He was around six years old when he saw it for the first time at our house. Watching him watch this film is one of my favorite memories. I don't know if I have ever seen a face as transfixed, as mesmerized, as awestruck as his face when he watched this first flying scene. I completely fell in love with the film once I saw it through his eyes – the eyes the film was meant to capture all along.

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That's my list. I know there are dozens of other worthy scenes that I could have mentioned. I would love to hear from our readers. In the comment section below, tell us about some of your favorite flying scenes. Anything is fair game – even planes, jets, and all other flying machines. Thanks for reading.