



Trainspotting (1996)

Director: Danny Boyle

Certificate: 18

Run time: 93 minutes

If you liked this film, you might also like: *Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino 1994), *Slum Dog Millionaire* (Boyle 2008), *Requiem for a Dream* (Aronofsky 2000).

Reviews:

BFI: " It remains a high-water mark for independent British cinema, proving that a low-budget UK film (£1.5 million) could completely match—and outshine—massive Hollywood productions in raw energy and cultural impact.."

Key Performances:

- **Ewan McGregor** as Renton
- **Robert Carlyle** as Begbie
- **Kelly MacDonald** as Diane
- **Irvine Welsh** as Mikey Forrester

Film Notes

Fresh from the success of his directorial debut, *Shallow Grave* (1994), Danny Boyle's second film *Trainspotting*, cemented his place as the UK's hottest director. Hollywood was soon to come calling for the man who grew up in a working-class Catholic family in Lancashire, and initially trained for the priesthood.

Two years before *Trainspotting*, Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* was released. A film that seemingly blew apart any notion of narrative structure and revelled in an intertextual soup of cultural references. Danny Boyle took those attributes and supercharged them with amphetamine rocket boosters!

Boyle and editor Masahiro Hirakubo created a film that seems to be permanently in motion. Scenes rarely settle into conventional rhythms, and the editing constantly reflects the fractured, heightened experiences of its characters. Rapid cutting, freeze frames, jump cuts and sudden changes of pace give *Trainspotting* an almost musical quality. The famous opening sequence is a perfect example: Renton and Spud hurtling through Edinburgh while Iggy Pop's *Lust for Life* drives the action forward. It is less an introduction to a story than an adrenaline shot straight into the bloodstream.

The film also delights in disrupting our expectations of cinematic space. Renton's drug experiences allow Boyle to abandon realism altogether. The infamous "Worst Toilet in Scotland" scene transforms a disgusting public toilet into a surreal underwater world,

while the later overdose scene plunges us into a nightmarish vision of addiction. Boyle isn't simply showing us what happens; he is attempting to put us inside Renton's experience. Camera movement, wide-angle lenses, unusual perspectives and abrupt edits repeatedly distort the ordinary world.

And then there is the music. Trainspotting has one of the great soundtracks of modern British cinema, but the songs are much more than a collection of excellent records. They provide the film with its rhythm and its cultural identity. From Iggy Pop and Lou Reed to Underworld, New Order and Blur, the soundtrack mixes punk, alternative rock, electronic dance music and Britpop. It captures a particular moment when the musical underground and popular culture were colliding.

Underworld's Born Slippy, used over the closing sequence, is particularly significant. Its relentless electronic pulse accompanies Renton's final act of the film. The song transforms what might otherwise have been a conventional conclusion into something euphoric and ambiguous.

That ambiguity is central to the film's enduring appeal. Trainspotting can be exhilarating, funny and visually intoxicating, sometimes within the same few minutes. Yet beneath the energy is a much darker story about addiction, friendship, poverty and the limited choices available to its characters.

Boyle's great achievement is to make the form reflect the content. The editing, camerawork and soundtrack don't merely decorate the story – they become the experience. Trainspotting doesn't so much invite us to watch its world as throw us headfirst into it.

Enjoy!

1. Robert Egbert reviews <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/trainspotting-1996>
2. Murray Smith, Trainspotting: BFI Film Classics
3. Internet Movie Database
www.imdb.com/title/tt0117951/?ref_=nv_sr_srsq_0_tt_8_nm_0_in_0_q_trainsp