

The world of investment can be a bit like the wild west – rarely properly regulated and full of pitfalls. Hi everyone, Ron Parks here and welcome back to the channel. And today we've got a fun one lined up. I know we usually walk you through the finer points of finance.

But we're so cooped up these days, by necessity, who wants to think exclusively about finance? So I thought it'd be fun and useful to tell you ten of my favorite movies about investing and finance. This is a personal list in no particular order. I'm not a film critic, just a filmgoer. But feel free to leave comments if you think I missed something that should have made the cut.

Every movie is bound to take liberties and change facts around for dramatic effect, but there are some out there that completely misunderstands what the world of finance is like. It can be high pressure, sure, but there are rarely guns and assassins out there.

While it's true that a skilled investor with a keen eye on the market and the ability to predict the many environmental or technical advances that will have an effect on whatever they invest in, a novice stands to lose as much as they gain.

But one thing is certain about investment – the high stakes and behind-the-scenes corruption can make for compelling drama. Here are some of the best films about investment.

[Display: "The Big Short (2015)"]

The Big Short. One day it might be useful to walk you through the 2008 housing crisis and its complexities, but for now, The Big Short does an admirable job.

Adam McKay began his directorial career working on comedies like Stepbrothers and Anchorman. There's nothing wrong with those movies, but I don't think they stand up. Something interesting happened when he released The Other Guys, though.

What looked like a buddy-cop comedy turned out to be a pretty scathing takedown of ponzi schemes. The end credits are essentially run over an infographic telling you how they work.

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So I thought, "This guy might have more in him than just a Will Ferrell vehicle."

I couldn't have been proven more right, and it started with The Big Short.

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The Big Short is an unfaltering glimpse into those who saw the housing bubble popping in 2008 and protecting themselves as opposed to clients. What's terrific about the film is that it's not just a very accurate breakdown of what happened; it lets you feel the rage right along with Steve Carrell's character, the only one with a conscience.

I think my favorite character is Christian Bale's Michael Burry, a hedge fund manager with Asperger's who recognizes just how unstable the housing market was. It could have been a standard procedural, but the eccentric performances of Christian Bale, Steve Carrell, and Ryan Gosling are enough to keep audience's attention.

[Display "Margin Call (2011)"]

Margin Call. I haven't seen a lot of J.C. Chandor's films, but I can tell each work completely unrecognizable from the last. Just take a look at IMDB; he's done a film about Robert Redford stranded at sea called All Is Lost which I saw and thought was quite good, and Margin Call.

You thought The Big Short was hard to take, try Margin Call. The movie takes place over a 24-hour period that, like The Big Short, focuses on the 2008 crash. It's not explicitly stated, but it's clearly inspired by the time.

Emergency meetings full of panic, frantic talks on rooftops ready to leap from, and complex investment-speak make for a surprisingly compelling film, as characters wonder what life will be like after the fall.

The answers they find are told in metaphor, with a broken Kevin Spacey literally digging a hole in the ground to bury remains. And dig. And dig...

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This is one of the bleakest films about the world of finance ever made, and no one even dies, the tone is dour, and the language is a little hard to navigate. My advice? Watch it with someone who knows about the industry.

Like a lot of films on this list, it's pretty cynical about its characters, showing just how little they care about people, only the well-being of the company.

It's a harrowing experience, but you don't always watch movies to feel good. This, as well as The Big Short, were released at the height of the occupy wall street movement, and as relics of the era, they're fascinating.

[Display "The Wizard of Lies (2017)"]

The Wizard of Lies. Everyone knows the name Bernie Madoff, the king of the pyramid scheme who defrauded investors both famous, in government, and just the average Joe. From his early days as a penny stockbroker in the 1960s to his rise and fall on Wall Street, Barry Levinson's film painstakingly lays out his crimes and dishonesty, with Robert De Niro in the lead role.

Madoff is currently 82, serving 150 years in prison, meaning that, unless he's an actual wizard, he'll never get out. That doesn't mean we can't relish movies where he's painted like the crook he is.

The Wizard of Lies doesn't really offer much insight into the Madoff scandal you can't get from watching CNN, but it's the performances that really draw you in. De Niro and Michelle Pfeiffer, who's been MIA for too long, couldn't be better.

And that's especially refreshing after seeing De Niro slum it for so many years in Meet the Parents sequels that just got worse and dreck like Bad Grandpa.

He never really tries to make you empathize with Madoff, but he does splendid work making him actually human. I think that's important to remember; these aren't supervillains, just human jerks. It's nice to know that when they have to, the old reliables are still just that.

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[Display "The Wolf of Wall Street (2013)"]

The Wolf of Wall Street. I get all the criticism. I do. I especially get women who say they just can't get into Scorsese movies. These unabashedly guy things.

It's not like he's on the path of stopping or slowing down, when everyone deemed The Irishman too long, he just went to Netflix. But The Wolf of Wall Street is AGGRESSIVELY Scorsese. There's a kind of manic energy, and I think when he's dealing with character's on a lot of drugs, it really works well.

He's been doing it since Harvey Keitel got drunk in Mean Streets.

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When Jordan Belfort wrote about his time on Wall Street essentially thieving for a decade, he probably still thought "wolf" was an awesome thing to be. But the last thing you want working for you is a wolf. They're predators.

And the alpha male behavior, which I have absolutely seen demonstrated, is absolutely as toxic as Scorsese portrays it. Di Caprio is a blast, so is Jonah Hill, and there's a special added cameo from Mathew McConaughey that's as unsettling as it is hilarious.

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[display American Psycho (2000)]

American Psycho. Wow, okay, let me clarify, no stockbroker or investor or anyone I know in the financial world is an outright serial killer. At least, I don't think...

The adaptation of Brett Easton Ellis' controversial novel about an '80s era Wall Street master who also happens to be a serial murderer is a brilliant satire of Reaganomics cruelty. I don't know if I entirely agree with its politics, but I can certainly see that perspective, and there's a lot about that decade that's embarrassing.

I have never read the novel, I know people who have who say the violence is absolutely grotesque and unnecessary, so I'm not that interested. The film is smart enough to tone it down.

It also features Christian Bale in the role that began his rise to fame. He *is* the 1980s, hanging out in clubs with overpriced drinks, snorting briefcases full of cocaine, and even being admired by Willem Dafoe's clueless detective investigating the disappearance of Bale's rival.

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The fact that he kills women with a chain saw is almost an aside to the cruelty of the world in which he dwells, where firm partners marvel at and compete to have the best business card.

What's particularly fascinating is the film's end, which is largely ambiguous, but I don't really think it matters whether or not it was in his mind or not. The truth is that these people, who think and talk in that ugly business way, are out there—scary thought.

[Display "Too Big To Fail (2011)"]

Too Big To Fail. We're definitely talking a lot about the housing crisis here, and there's a good reason for it. I don't think Hollywood has reacted with so much anger about something in a while.

After the housing crisis, U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson and Ben Bernanke set about figuring out how to save Wall Street, or determine if it was worth saving at all. It all culminated with a controversial but necessary bailout that still left some investment companies in the wind, saving others so that the economy would still work.

The film, an adaptation of Andrew Ross Sorkin's book about it, features some great performances, particularly Paul Giamatti as Bernanke. But its secret weapon is its director. You may not know the name of the late Curtis Hanson.

But Hanson directed some pretty great films, almost anonymously. There's the goofy fun of his 80s thriller with Rob Lowe, and James Spader *Bad Influence*, the 90s yuppie horror of *The Hand That Rocks The Cradle* – both of those are early silly efforts, but they're not bad.

All of them are good or at least interesting, and *Too Big To Fail* is no exception. It's a surprisingly delicate, smart, and sympathetic portrayal of Paulson, and Hurt is excellent. You really get the sense he's at odds with himself.

Saving wall street the way he did is still a matter of controversy, and Hurt plays it as though he was completely torn apart by doing it. That scene where he finally kneels before Clinton is as painful as it's supposed to be.

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Ultimately, it's about one of the craziest long-shot sacrifices of recent government decisions that managed to work, leaving ten companies with 77 percent of the country's wealth, meaning they are, indeed, too big to fail.

It's important movies confront how we ended up where we are, even if they don't have all the answers. And Hanson does some fine work showing just that.

[Display "Boiler Room (2000)"]

Or as some like to call it, *Wall Street Jr.* Anyone who has ever toiled their college days away working for a telemarketing firm knows the ins and outs of cold-calling offices – their practices are so dishonest and unregulated they're regularly raided by

police.

Regularly these offices with banks of phones and ancient computers that cold-call strangers are set up, only to be torn down if the cops come around.

Boiler Room focuses on a young, idealistic college dropout, Giovanni Ribisi, who runs an illegal casino out of his apartment. He's the perfect recruit for Ben Affleck's firm, cold-calling innocent civilians and promising them they stand to make millions by investing with them.

It's not long before Ribisi realizes the firm is running a pump and dump scheme, and it's only a matter of time before it all collapses. I actually prefer this to Wall Street, even though the film seems to disagree with me.

Boiler Room's characters are so in awe of the firm, and I wonder if the director is as well. But I think it's intentionally meant to show they're essentially worshipping criminal behavior.

Giovanni Ribisi is one of those actors who you don't always know by name, or you remember him for bad things like *The Other Sister*, but he's always been a solid actor. And he really carries the film well. I particularly liked the relationship with his judge father.

Affleck is pretty much a cameo, so if you don't like him, you don't have to worry much, and he's pretty good here. But the real antagonist, sort of the Gordon Gekko-lite, is Vin Diesel.

He's actually quite an imposing figure. I think, overall, it lets off its lead character a little too easy, but it's a pretty smart depiction of that kind of lifestyle.

[display "Trading Places" (1983)]

Trading Places. How could anyone in the world of finance not absolutely love this movie? You got Eddie Murphy and Dan Aykroyd in their prime, both fresh off Saturday Night Live.

And John Landis is directing, right after giving us *Animal House*, *The Blue Brothers*, and *An American Werewolf in London*. I'll tell you a little fact I learned researching. Those of you who have seen it will understand, and this really made me love the movie that much more.

Originally, they wanted the role of Clarence Beeks to be played by Nixon crony G. Gordon Liddy. It ultimately went to Paul Gleason, who was great, but Liddy was on

board. He was going to play the role... until he found out what the Gorilla does.

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Watch the movie if you haven't, and you'll laugh even harder, thinking about it.

So Trading Places finds Dan Aykroyd as a wealthy, uptight stockbroker. The kind of role he's made to play.

And because his bosses decide to have a little fun for the matter of one dollar, they ruin his life and bet they can't replace him at the firm with a street bum played by Murphy.

I love Eddie Murphy, particularly when he was at his height. He made a film for Netflix recently that showed just how he still has it, that those years of terrible movies like Norbit were just cash-ins.

When he's passionate about a project, he pours himself in it. And he brings the same energy he brought to SNL and Beverly Hills Cop here. It's also nice to see old actors Don Ameche and Ralph Bellamy as the two old bosses.

Interesting fact, Ameche and Bellamy reprise their roles, only they've been reduced to homeless bums in Coming to America.

[display ref10]

How many movies end not with a shootout but with a climactic day on the floor of the commodities trade?

And if you have any doubts about the film's accuracy, check this out: the government became so concerned with the scam being pulled in the last act that they made it illegal to profit from ill-gotten information in 2010, calling it The Eddie Murphy rule.

[display Wall Street (1987)]

Wall Street. I wrestled with putting this on the list. I do like it, though I don't think it's Stone's best work.

But I also think it's very dated and of-its-time. As much as it wants to be a scathing indictment of corrupt practices that screw the working man every day, it also stars Charlie Sheen, a guy who very much embodies the worst of money, excess, and greed.

So it's sort of strange watching Stone, and a very game Michael Douglas, try to make grand statements about the state of the world with stuff like "Greed is good." And all of that feels very true and appropriately scary, but it's undercut by the lead.

There's also some embarrassing writing, like the infamous moment where Sheen stands at the window and utters, "Who am I?"

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But let's face it, you're not here for Sheen; you're here for Douglas. And he's an absolute powerhouse. He owns the role, and every second he's onscreen is an assault. He's the epitome of the charming sociopath.

What's also great about the film is that it makes investment and financing accessible in ways the other movies I've talked about don't. You really have to have some prior education to get into something like Margin Call. This, anyone can follow.

I think that's laudable. Also, to offset the Charlie Sheen issue, Stone does include his much better father, Martin, in a subplot that actually manages to generate emotion.

That's gotta be the trickiest thing to do. It's easy to depict someone going broke as a tragedy. But getting you to feel for those responsible for it is another matter entirely. So it might not be the best movie, but again the anger is palpable and understandable.

[Display "Glengarry Glen Ross"]

The other film that Boiler Room clearly took inspiration from is based on a Pulitzer Prize-winning play by David Mamet. Mamet, in recent years, hasn't done very much worth mentioning – maybe that Phil Spector film was good for the Pacino performance.

But in his prime, he was a firecracker. He created a whole new kind of dialogue. Much like Aaron Sorkin, it's fast-paced, but there's a cadence to it like it's written to a metronome.

Glengarry Glen Ross also has one of the most impressive casts of any movie, with Al Pacino, Ed Harris, Jack Lemmon, Jonathan Pryce, Alec Baldwin, Alan Arkin, someone else we've already mentioned, even the cop is played by an actor you may recognize from 24.

Set over a night and day in what was a kind of precursor to the Boiler Rooms of today, it focuses on a group of down-on-their-luck salesman who speak in that hyper-masculine way but ultimately don't really amount to anything.

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Pacino is probably the big hotshot in the room, but honestly, look where he's working! It's not like any of these guys are on top of the world, so when Baldwin comes and berates them to try to motivate them, it's pretty mean.

It makes sense that one of them would rip the joint off, which happens after the first act. I think, for me, the real standout performance here is Jack Lemmon. I always loved him in comedies with Walter Matthau, but here he shows a dramatic range you just kind of forget he had.

And that character is a bit of an icon now. He's the basis for Gil, the hapless salesman who floats from job to job on *The Simpsons*. Lemmon is the heart and soul of this otherwise soulless world, and it makes the final act that much more tragic.

The writing is just spectacular. It didn't win a Pulitzer prize just for wit and vulgarity. It also really gives some insight into the human condition. I was very affected by it, and I think it'll stand for decades as probably the best play-to-screen adaptation out there.

[Display "Rogue Trader" (1999)]

Not many have seen *Rogue Trader* and I personally didn't know about it until I started thinking about this list. But I watched it, and it immediately found a spot.

Rogue Trader stars Ewan MacGregor as derivatives broker Nick Leeson during the time he worked at Barings Bank.

I don't know how much you know about Leeson, but during his time working there, he essentially gambled away other people's money without so much as a glance from his superiors. It's investment trading gone awry—just madness.

And the film pretty accurately captures Leeson's book about his incredibly illegal behavior. I think he loses something up to like 800 million pounds over the course of the film.

His spending is audacious. It really is one of the most despicable things a trader can do. Nevertheless, Ewan MacGregor is quite compelling, and the movie moves along at an appropriately fast-pace.

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I know it wasn't well-received by critics, but it doesn't do anything that *The Wolf of Wall Street* doesn't. I can see its flaws, I think it could have done better portraying the lifestyle, but in terms of providing insight into something like the derivatives and white-collar crime, I think it works quite well.

Okay, well, that about does it. There are plenty of other films I can go on about. Perhaps sometime in the future, depending on how you guys liked it, we'll revisit this. I was thinking maybe something about documentaries. But I hope you've enjoyed yourself so far. If you did, smash that like button and subscribe, I try and post every week, if not more and I look forward to next time.

Ref1: "The Other Guys" (2010)

Sony Pictures Releasing

End Credits:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yBfWz2bSOQ&ab_channel=VFXunionWTFe

Ref2: "The Big Short" (2015)

Paramount Pictures

Bale: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cxj dj5_5yNM&ab_channel=Extractor

Ref3: "Margin Call" (2011)

Lionsgate

"It's just money":

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtFyP0qy9XU&ab_channel=Movieclips

Ref4: "The Wizard of Lies" (2017)

HBO Films

Telling his family:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mm6Rn_uvwU0&ab_channel=Weyland

ref5: "Mean Streets" (1973)

Warner Bros.

Drunk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkGDaroLl_M&ab_channel=Movieclips

ref6: "The Wolf of Wall Street" (2013)

Paramount Pictures

McConaughey:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wM6exo00T5I&ab_channel=OGF

ref 7: "American Psycho (2000)"

Lionsgate Films

Hip to be square:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ruw9fsh3PNY&ab_channel=Movieclips

ref8: "Too Big To Fail" (2011)

HBO Films

TARP: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcoHpiiWc9Q&ab_channel=Weyland

ref9: "Trading Places" (1983)

Paramount Pictures

Gorilla (1:50-2:01):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vh7wi6bbPzo&ab_channel=AlexCorleone

ref10: "Coming to America" (1988)

Paramount Pictures

The Duke Brothers:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0GLVc4f02k&ab_channel=DanCooper

ref11: "Wall Street" (1987)

20th Century Fox

"Greed is Good":

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVxYOQS6ggk&ab_channel=Movieclips

ref12: "Glengarry Glen Ross" (1992)

New Line Cinema

Baldwin:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=elrnAl6ygeM&t=283s&ab_channel=BlueInfinity
[Film](#)

ref13: "Rouge Trader" (1999)

Pathe Films

I just lost \$50 million quid in one day:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-KdanZUZ88g&ab_channel=okidokivideos