



Spanking the Monkey (1994)



 A grunge-era Sundance winner directed and written by David O. Russell (*Flirting with Disaster*, *I ♥ Huckabees*), this is one those black comedies that's so dark, you're more likely to cry than laugh. In fact, the only slightly amusing thing about *Spanking the Monkey* is its title, which alludes to the main character's repeated masturbation attempts (interrupted every time). Yes, Ray (Jeremy Davies) is one horny-as-all-hell college student, returning home to New York on his summer break and then headed to Washington, D.C., for an internship with the surgeon general's office. But there's a change of plans when his mother, Susan (Alberta Watson), injures her leg and is bedridden for much of the summer. Ray stays behind to tend to her every need, which includes bathing and the occasional massage. That's where things get, er, sticky. Mom makes the move on her already confused son, throwing his sexual curiosity—and mental health—completely off track. With some very adult issues weighing heavily on his mind, Ray tries to push it aside and hang with his high school stoner buddies, Nicky (Matthew Puckett), Curtis (Zak Orth), and Joel (Josh Phillip Weinstein). Usually, he turns down the joint being passed around, but after Ray's Oedipal dalliance, he takes a toke, which prompts him to jump off a cliff (it must have been some seriously strong herb). He lives, but Ray's dramatic leap is the perfect way out of a truly twisted situation.

Spirit of '76, The (1990)




 When a group of scientists from the year 2176 (led by chief “Minister of Knowledge” Chevron-17, played by Devo's Mark Mothersbaugh) send a delegation back in time to recover Earth documents lost in a magnetic storm (namely, the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence), the time machine mistakenly lands in 1976 instead of 1776. The futuristic crew of Adam-11 (seventies

heartthrob David Cassidy), Chanel-6 (Olivia d'Abo), and Heinz-57 (Geoff Hoyle) arrive on Bicentennial Day and, after meeting stoners Chris and Tommy (Jeffrey and Steve McDonald of the seminal indie band Redd Kross), they try to blend in by donning bell-bottoms, glittered boots, and stars and stripes. But with the UFO-obsessed science nerd Rodney Snodgrass on their tail, and, soon after, the authorities, the group gets separated. Chanel hides in a head shop called Hokus Smokus, where she meets a pothead (played by Tommy Chong), who gives her a paraphernalia primer. And it's on a “bicentennial bong” that she first sees what the founding fathers look like. Heinz, meanwhile, ends up stuck at a self-improvement seminar by Dr. Von Mobile (Rob Reiner), while Adam works on fixing the time machine with Chris and Tommy's help (and a tankful of eye-drop liquid). After a quick disco dance-off with the studly Eddie Trojan (Leif Garrett), Chanel rejoins her time traveling buddies to put on an explosive show at the boys' high school science fair. *The Spirit of '76* is a Coppola family affair (Roman Coppola wrote the script with Lucas Reiner, son of Carl, and his sister Sofia—only seventeen during pre-production—was costume designer), that's hokey as hell, but redeems itself with the occasional burst of psychedelia and oddball seventies reference. File this time-travel flick in the half-baked idea pile.

Starsky & Hutch (2004)



 In this comedic take on the seventies TV classic, Vince Vaughn plays funnyman coke dealer Reese Feldman, whose sunny criminal existence is put at risk when Bay City's finest policeman, David Starsky (Ben Stiller), and his new, easygoing partner Ken “Hutch” Hutchinson (Owen Wilson), find his card in a floater's wallet. It turns out Reese's right-hand man Kevin (Jason Bateman) has discovered a method to alter the cell structure of the coca plant and make it completely undetectable, thereby opening the floodgates to every scumbag looking to get his dirty hands on the clean streets of Bay City. Thanks to help from an informant, the sugar-sweet, smooth-as-butter Huggy Bear (Snoop Dogg), Starsky and Hutch are tipped off to a major coke deal