

Fab 5 Hero Sidekicks

This one was harder than expected! So, I tried to put together a criterion by which I could judge sidekicks.

What makes a good Hero's sidekick?

- Is perceived as a secondary, supporting, or background character from the perspective of which the story is told
- Contributes significantly (either directly or indirectly) to the Hero on their journey
- Bonus points for qualities such as selflessness, sacrifice, bravery, compassion, or even being an unsung hero in their own right
- Points deducted for "qualities unbecoming a sidekick"

This allowed me to eliminate several characters whose only purpose as sidekick seems to be comic relief, and also characters in some large ensemble casts where there aren't standout heroes or sidekicks (because when everybody's a hero, nobody's a sidekick).

Based on these criteria, here's what I came up with:

5) Phil from Hercules

Though not without his faults, Philoctetes is probably the closest we get to a professional sidekick.

4) Ray from The Princess and the Frog

You start off thinking that Ray's just another "comic relief" sidekick, but then his story arc becomes unexpectedly poignant. In what is surely one of Disney's most underappreciated films of the last 20 years, Ray is a shining star. Plus, as a gay man, I feel obligated to acknowledge a sidekick who can defeat his enemies using the power of his butt.

3) Olaf from Frozen

Olaf is another character who at first glance seems to just be there to balance out the "comic relief vs. dead parents" formula. And then, despite his simplistic nature, he proves to be one of the wisest characters in the film. But what put him in my Fab 5 list is the fact that this movie can't work on any level without him. Anna and Elsa are estranged for about a decade, and as the personification of their childhood love, Olaf facilitates the sisters' reconciliation as adults. Without Olaf, Anna doesn't save Elsa and everyone in Arendelle likely freezes to death.

2) Andy (and later Bonnie) from the Toy Story franchise

You could do an entire podcast on this one. Some might argue that Buzz is the sidekick, but from my perspective, most all of Woody's development over the four movies is driven by his relationships with Andy and then later Bonnie. Without Andy or Bonnie (and all the adventures they shared) I don't believe that Woody would have grown to be the heroic figure he is at the end of Toy Story 4.

1) R2-D2 from the Star Wars franchise

Without question the greatest hero's sidekick ever. In episode 4 alone that little droid is responsible for:

- Safeguarding the stolen Death Star plans that practically everyone in Rogue One died for;
- Luring Luke away from the farm to find Obi Wan;
- Locating Princess Leia on the Death Star detention level;
- Reminding C-3PO to turn his comm link back on, and THEN shutting down all the garbage mashers on the detention level, thereby saving all four of the main heroes;
- Fixing the stabilizer on Luke's X-Wing and then increasing the power so that Luke can successfully complete his Death Star trench run.

And that's just in the first movie! By the time you get through Empire, Jedi, and the prequel trilogy, the list of times R2-D2 saves the day becomes ridiculous.

Finally...

Sidekick honorable mentions: Hei Hei, Pascal, Dory, Pacha, Genie, and Dante

Overrated sidekicks: Sebastian, Timmon & Pumbaa, and Jiminy Cricket