The Joker - Best Portrayals of The Joker
By Tyler Reinhardt

Joaquin Phoenix (Arthur Fleck/The Joker) in *The Joker* (2019)

The Joker is not only DC comics' most infamous villain, but also one of the most iconic antagonists in movie history. Red lips, green hair, white skin, purple suit, and a creepy grin are all quintessential traits that make Batman's archenemy easily identifiable.

In the upcoming movie, *Joker*, Joaquin Phoenix plays the titular villain in an adaptation of the character who is driven to a life of crime and chaos after a failed career as a comedian. Differing slightly from other portrayals, this movie attempts to explain how and why the Joker (previously Arthur Fleck) has come to be the notorious villain he is today.

Throughout DC Comic history, the Joker's personality has tremendously evolved, with each actor having a unique and exciting take on the iconic villain despite his physical appearance having experienced few changes. The Clown Prince of Crime is known for his psychopathic disposition and has overtime proven to be one of the most difficult characters to emulate. That being said, here is our list of the top three best performances of the Joker:

3. Mark Hamill
"Batman: The Animated Series" (1992-1995)

Mark Hamill voicing the Joker in "Batman: The Animated Series" (1992-1995)

Despite most frequently being associated with the hero of the *Star Wars*, franchise, Luke Skywalker, Mark Hamill landed the role of the Joker in Warner Bros' "*Batman: The Animated Series*" with his exceptional acting abilities. Hamill's voice is the most recognizable of all actors who have portrayed the Joker, as he voiced the character for nearly 25 years. In particular, his iconic deranged and horrifying laugh perfectly embodies the villain's insanity and dark sense of humor. Throughout Hamill's 25-year role as the Joker, he sustained the Batman villain's balance between a complete clown and murderous psychopath, which adds to the allure of Hamill's version of the sadistic criminal.

2. Jack Nicholson
Batman (1989)

Jack Nicholson (The Joker) in *Batman* (1989)

Jack Nicholson starred as the Joker in Tim Burton's *Batman* and ultimately stole the show. As the first cinematic portrayal of the villain, he truly brought the comic book character to life in a quirky, charismatic and actually *funny* yet psychotic adaptation of the supervillain. From the museum dance scene to the parade scene, there is a hoard of iconic moments throughout the movie that demonstrates Nicholson's nearly perfect impression of the Joker. His performance captivated audiences and perhaps even overshadowed Michael Keaton's performance of the movie's titular character.

1. Heath Ledger
The Dark Knight (2008)

Heath Ledger (The Joker) in *The Dark Knight* (2008)

Heath Ledger's portrayal of the Joker in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight,* the second installment of *The Dark Knight Trilogy*, is easily the most chilling and terrifying performance of the anarchist mastermind. Ledger's Oscar ® worthy performance is frequently noted by critics as being the leading and most definitive rendition of the Joker, as he flawlessly captures the villain's pure insanity and sociopathic nature. Unlike the many other portrayals of the Joker, Ledger's version of the character is actually not funny -- at all. Rather, he is entirely cruel and evil as he takes joy in torturing the innocent (e.g., when he implanted an explosive in a man's stomach). Lastly, Ledger's chilling one-liner "Why so serious?" and its origin story help deliver an all the more mesmerizing and haunting performance for audiences to rave over.