Kutay Calik
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STEVE JOBS

How do you tell the story of someone's life on film?

Do you condense it into a riveting montage of greatest hits, or capture it within a narrow two-hour window, recreating the legendary moment that made them an icon? These are the expectations audiences often bring to biographical films. Yet, as Steve Jobs himself once said, "People don't know what they want until you show it to them." This philosophy lies at the very heart of Steve Jobs.

Many individuals have shaped the world over the past fifty years, but few have had as profound and far-reaching an impact as Apple co-founder Steve Jobs. When examining how modern society has evolved, it is difficult to overlook the influence of a single man whose ideas reshaped not only technology, but culture itself. Jobs did not merely revolutionize the personal computer; his vision transformed multiple industries—from animated filmmaking through Pixar, to music through the iPod and iTunes, and even the way we experience retail spaces.

The most significant shift, however, came in 2007 with the introduction of the iPhone—a moment whose impact is still unfolding today. Announced just four years before Jobs' death, the iPhone fundamentally altered how people communicate, work, and live. Rather than presenting this achievement as a conventional triumph, Steve Jobs chooses a more intimate and unconventional approach, focusing not on the entirety of a life, but on the moments of pressure, conflict, and creation that define a person.

MYTH VS MAN

Two films have attempted to tell the story of Steve Jobs: Jobs and Steve Jobs. Although both focus on the same individual, they could not be more different in how they approach their subject. The contrast between these films highlights two fundamentally different philosophies of biographical storytelling.

Jobs presents Steve Jobs as a largely inspirational figure, tracing his life from youth to success in a conventional, chronological manner. The film emphasizes milestones, achievements, and well-known events, often positioning Jobs as a visionary genius whose greatness is rarely questioned. As a result, the narrative feels informational rather than revelatory. Much like reading a Wikipedia page, the audience is told what happened, but is rarely invited to understand why it mattered or how it shaped the man behind the myth. Conflict exists, but it is softened, and Jobs himself is portrayed more as a symbol of innovation than as a complex human being.

In contrast, Steve Jobs rejects the traditional cradle-to-grave biopic structure entirely. Instead of cataloguing achievements, the film delves into character, using three product launches as a framework to explore what makes Steve Jobs who he is—both his brilliance and his cruelty. This version of Jobs is not idealized. He is confrontational, emotionally distant, obsessive, and often deeply flawed. Yet it is precisely these flaws that make him compelling. The film is less concerned with proving his greatness and more interested in interrogating the cost of it.

Where Jobs tells us that Steve Jobs was important, Steve Jobs shows us why—and at what personal and emotional expense. One film documents history; the other interrogates identity. In doing so, Steve Jobs aligns more closely with Jobs' own philosophy: it does not give audiences what they expect, but instead reveals something truer beneath the surface.

ART VS BIOGRAPHY

The film Steve Jobs is not a conventional biography. Rather than functioning as a factual record, it operates like an impressionist painting—concerned less with literal accuracy than with emotional truth. Where a biography aims to document events as they occurred, *Steve Jobs* seeks to capture what those events *felt like* to the people involved.

The film depicts an intense confrontation between Steve Jobs and John Sculley in 1988, followed by another encounter in 1998 in which they revisit the events that led to Jobs' departure from Apple in 1985. In reality, John Sculley and Steve Jobs never spoke again after Jobs left Apple. These meetings did not occur in the way the film presents them. However, this historical inaccuracy is deliberate rather than careless. Both men were left without closure, their friendship ending abruptly and painfully, unresolved to the very end. The film reconstructs conversations that never happened in order to express emotions that undeniably did.

What matters to the filmmakers is not whether these exchanges occurred, but whether they *feel true*. By dramatizing unresolved conflict, the film remains faithful to the inner experiences of its characters rather than the external record of events. In doing so, it transforms history into

compelling drama, prioritizing psychological authenticity over chronological precision.

Screenwriter Aron Sorkin has spoken directly about this distinction between art and journalism, stating: *"When you're doing a piece of journalism, you have an obligation to be objective. I have an obligation to be subjective. That's the difference between art and journalism." Steve Jobs* succeeds precisely because it embraces this subjectivity. The filmmakers were not interested in recreating the past with documentary exactness, nor in constantly "looking over their shoulder" to ensure every detail was historically precise. Instead, they approached the story from the inside—through emotion, memory, and conflict—rather than from the outside.

As a result, *Steve Jobs* does not function as a biography in the traditional sense. It is an impressionist portrait of a man: fragmented, intense, contradictory, and deeply human.

SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

Previously mentioned, John and Steve's discussion scene is the encapsulation of what this film has to offer. It feels like a culmination of everything that has happened and everything that is yet to happen. A ten-minute argument set across two different time periods, featuring Shakespearean-level dialogue performed by first-rate actors, scored by an original symphony that builds toward a devastating climax. The scene is supported by captivating cinematography and electrifying direction, creating the sensation of watching the finale of a riveting action film.

THINK DIFFERENT

When you look at everything Steve Jobs achieved in his incredible 56 years, it is almost impossible to narrow down which parts to focus on in order to tell his story. Jobs, starring Ashton Kutcher, tries its best to highlight the most important moments, but even then it falls short. Zipping through nearly thirty years of a man's life does not allow the audience to latch onto a single relationship or constant that can be examined in any meaningful way.

Kutcher's version ends with Steve Jobs' famous "Here's to the crazy ones" speech from the "Think Different" campaign. Jobs speaks about rebels, round pegs in square holes, those who are not bound by rules and who have no respect for the status quo—the ones who push the human race forward. The irony is that we have just spent two hours watching a biopic that could not be more in line with the status quo.

The film is generic and inoffensive, leaving the audience with little more than a familiar conclusion: Steve Jobs was a great man who made great products. This is information we already knew. Steve Jobs was anything but generic or formulaic, and there was far more to his life that could have —and should have—been explored. Fortunately, we have another film that chooses to do exactly that.

LISA

I asked a question earlier: how do you tell someone's story on film?

One answer is by allowing another perspective to shine new light on what was a deeply complicated relationship. In Steve Jobs, the story of Lisa becomes central to understanding who Steve Jobs really was. The film presents Jobs as a man obsessed with one thing: control. From end-to-end control of his computers, to controlling the narrative of his massive public profile, to his obsession with starting perfectly on time. Yet there was one thing he never had control over—the circumstances of his adoption.

Steve Jobs was given up as a baby, rejected by one set of parents, and finally adopted by Paul and Clara Jobs at one month old. As he says in the film, *"It's having no control that you find out you're out of the loop. When the most crucial events in your life were set in motion... as long as you have control, I don't understand why people give it up."*

The cruel irony is that a man who was abandoned as a child would later have a child of his own and abandon her before she was even born. What is treated as an over-the-top argument in Jobs, and then barely addressed again, becomes the beating heart of *Steve Jobs*. Throughout the film, we watch the evolving relationship between Steve and his daughter Lisa. We first meet her as a five-year-old, proudly announcing that her father named a computer after her—the Apple Lisa—only to be cruelly corrected by Steve, who insists it was merely a coincidence.

Despite his attempts to detach himself emotionally, we see Steve genuinely lost for words for the first time when Lisa creates an abstract painting using MacPaint. The final words of the first act are Steve telling John Sculley, *"Lisa made a painting on the Mac."* The moment invites the audience to question which of Steve's creations he is more proud of—his revolutionary computer, or his real-life daughter.

By the final act, Lisa is in college, and their relationship remains unresolved. Joanna reaches a breaking point, no longer willing to be complicit in Steve's treatment of his daughter. She tells him, *"I love that you don't care how much money a person makes, you care what they make. But what you make isn't supposed to be the best part of you. When you're a father, that's what's supposed to be the best part of you—and for you, Steve, it's the worst."*

When Lisa finally confronts him about why he denied being her father, his response—*"I'm poorly made"*—offers the most revealing insight into his character.

In the final moments of the film, as Steve readies himself to walk on stage for the iMac launch, the *"Here's to the Crazy Ones"* video begins to play. But unlike its use in the Kutcher film, it is not the emotional centerpiece. Instead, it plays quietly beneath the true climax: an exchange between a father and his daughter. Steve hands Lisa a piece of paper. She unfolds it to find a printout of the abstract image she created on MacPaint in 1984.

In its final moments, the film suggests that computers—and the things created with them—can be works of art, and that after all this time, the controlling and uncompromising figure behind the machine is, in fact, human.