

'Big Lebowski,' 'Ferris Bueller's Day Off' among National Film Registry's 25 selections



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"The Big Lebowski," "Ferris Bueller's Day Off," "Rosemary's Baby," "Saving Private Ryan" and "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" are among the 25 films saluted by the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress in the organization's annual selection of notable works.

The org says selection will help ensure preservation of these films. This year's choices bring the registry total to 650, a small fraction of the Library's vast collection of 1.3 million items. As always, the choices are eclectic, including Hollywood films, indies, documentaries, silent movies and student films.

"The National Film Registry showcases the extraordinary diversity of America's film heritage and the disparate strands making it so vibrant," said the Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. "By preserving these films, we protect a crucial element of American creativity, culture and history."

Under the terms of the National Film Preservation Act, each year the Librarian of Congress names 25 films that are "culturally, historically or aesthetically" significant. The films must be at least 10 years old. The Librarian makes the annual registry selections after reviewing hundreds of titles nominated by the public and conferring with Library film curators and the distinguished members of the National Film Preservation Board. In the announcement, the NFPB urged the public to make nominations for next year's registry at its website.

The list also includes John Lasseter's 1986 animated film, "Luxo Jr.;" films from Howard Hawks, Arthur Penn and Frank Tashlin; two Fox musicals featuring Carmen Miranda; and Efraín Gutiérrez's 1976 independent "Please Don't Bury Me Alive!," considered by historians to be the first Chicano feature film.

Also added to the registry are seven reels of untitled and unassembled footage from 1913 featuring vaudevillian Bert Williams, the first African-American Broadway headliner and the most popular recording artist before 1920.

In 2013, the Library of Congress released a report that determined that 70% of the nation's silent feature films have been lost forever and only 14% exist in their original 35mm format.

The complete list of the 2014 National Film Registry selections:

Bert Williams Lime Kiln Club Field Day (1913)

In 1913, a cast of African-American performers, including vaudevillian Bert Williams, gathered in the Bronx to make a feature-length film. After considerable footage was shot, the film was abandoned. One hundred years later, the seven reels of unassembled footage were discovered in the film vaults of the Museum of Modern Art, and are now believed to constitute the earliest surviving feature film starring black actors. The film also starred Odessa Warren Grey and members of the Harlem stage show known as J. Leubrie Hill's "Darktown Follies."

The Big Lebowski (1998)

Joel and Ethan Coen explore themes of alienation, inequality and class structure via a group of hard-luck, offbeat characters suddenly drawn into each other's orbits. Jeff Bridges stars as "The Dude," an L.A.-based slacker. Joining Bridges are John Goodman, Tara Reid, Julianne Moore, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Steve Buscemi and John Turturro. "Lebowski" was only middling successful at the box office, but television, the Internet, home video and word-of-mouth have made the film a cult classic.

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Down Argentine Way (1940)

Betty Grable's first starring role in a Technicolor musical began her rise at 20th Century-Fox. Released just over a year before America entered World War II, this film helped establish her as the pinup queen. In the film, Grable traveling to South America and falling in love with Don Ameche. Carmen Miranda makes her American film debut, and the Nicolas Brothers' unparalleled dance routines dazzle.

The Dragon Painter (1919)

After becoming Hollywood's first Asian star, Japanese-born Sessue Hayakawa formed his own production company, Haworth Pictures (combining his name with that of director William Worthington). "The Dragon Painter," one of more than 20 feature films his company produced between 1918 and 1922, teamed Hayakawa and his wife Tsuru Aoki in the story of an obsessed, untutored painter and his wife. Reviewers of the time praised the film for its seemingly authentic Japanese atmosphere, including the city of Hakone and its Shinto gates, built in Yosemite Valley, California.

Felicia (1965)

This 13-minute short subject, marketed as an educational film, records a slice of life in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles prior to the rebellions of 1965. Filmmakers Trevor Greenwood, Robert Dickson and Alan Gorg were UCLA film students when they crafted a documentary from the perspective of Felicia Bragg, a high-school student of African-American and Hispanic descent. Her first-person narrative covers footage of her family, school and neighborhood, creating a time capsule that's both historically and culturally significant.

Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986)

John Hughes' first film on the registry is a story of a teenager (Matthew Broderick) whose day of playing hooky leads to comic misadventures and self-realization. Hughes depicted late-20th-century youth, their outward and inward lives. With Chicago serving as backdrop and a street performance of "Twist and Shout" as the film's centerpiece, Ferris Bueller emerged as one of film's greatest and most fully realized teen heroes. Alan Ruck, Mia Sara, Jennifer Grey and Jeffrey Jones co-starred.

The Gang's All Here (1943)

Showgirl Alice Faye, Fox's No. 1 musical star, is romanced by a soldier who uses an assumed name and then turns out to be a rich playboy. Carmen Miranda is also featured and her outrageous costume is highlighted in the musical number "The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat." Busby Berkeley, who had just finished a long stint directing musicals at MGM and an earlier one at Warner Bros., directs and choreographs the film.

House of Wax (1953)

A remake of 1933's "Mystery of the Wax Museum," the 1953 "House of Wax" expanded upon the earlier horror tale of a mad sculptor who encases his victim's corpses in wax. It added the dark talents of Vincent Price and helped introduce 3-D visual effects to a wide audience. "House of Wax," produced by Warner Bros. and released in April 1953, is considered the first full-length 3-D color film ever produced and released by a U.S. major. Along with Price, Phyllis Kirk, Frank Lovejoy and Carolyn Jones (as one of Price's early victims) complete the cast. André de Toth directed.

Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport (2000)

Just prior to World War II, a rescue operation aided the youngest victims of Nazi terror when 10,000 Jewish and other children were sent from their homes and families to live with foster families and in group homes in Great Britain. This Oscar-winning film was directed by Mark Jonathan Harris, writer and director of another Oscar winner, "The Long Way Home," and was produced by Deborah Oppenheimer, whose mother was among the children evacuated.

Little Big Man (1970)

In this Arthur Penn-directed Western, Dustin Hoffman (with exceptional assistance from make-up artist Dick Smith) plays a 121-year-old man looking back at his life as a pioneer in America's Old West. The film is ambitious, both in its historical scope and narrative approach, which interweaves fact and myth, historical figures and events and fanciful tall tales. "Little Big Man" has been called an epic reinvented as a yarn, and the Western reimagined for a post-1960s audience. Penn, Hoffman and scriptwriter Calder Willingham (from the novel by Thomas Berger) upend Western motifs.

Luxo Jr. (1986)

The moving desk lamp that now begins every Pixar film has its genesis in this charming, computer-animated short subject, directed by John Lasseter and produced by Lasseter and fellow Pixar visionary Bill Reeves. In the two-minute, 30-second film, two lamps—one parentally large and one childishly small (the "Junior" of the title)—interact with a brightly colored ball. Nominated for an Oscar in 1986 for animated short, "Luxo Jr." was the first three-dimensional computer-animated film ever to be nominated for an Academy Award.

Moon Breath Beat (1980)

Lisze Bechtold created "Moon Breath Beat," a five-minute color short, while a student at California Institute of the Arts under the tutelage of artist and filmmaker Jules Engel, who founded the Experimental Animation program at CalArts. Engel asked, hypothetically, "What happens when an animator follows a line, a patch of color, or a shape into the unconscious? What wild images would emerge?" "Moon Breath Beat" reveals Bechtold responding with fluidity and whimsy.

Please Don't Bury Me Alive! (1976)

The San Antonio barrio in the early 1970s is the setting for writer-director-star Efraín Gutiérrez's independent piece. Gutiérrez not only created the film from top to bottom on a shoestring, he also acted as its initial distributor and chief promoter, negotiating bookings throughout the Southwest. Chon Noriega, director of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, wrote, "The film is important as an instance of regional filmmaking, as a bicultural and bilingual narrative, and as a precedent that expanded the way that films got made."

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The Power and the Glory (1933)

Preston Sturges' first original screenplay, "The Power and the Glory," is a tragedy that contrasts sharply with his hit comedies of the 1940s. Directed by William K. Howard, "The Power and the Glory" introduced a non-chronological structure to mainstream movies that was said to influence "Citizen Kane." Like that film, "Power" presents a fragmented rags-to-riches tale of an American industrial magnate that begins with his death, in this case a suicide, and sensitively proceeds to produce a deeply affecting, morally ambivalent portrayal.

Rio Bravo (1959)

Hollywood legend says this Western, directed by Howard Hawks, was produced in part as a riposte to Fred Zinnemann's "High Noon." The film trades in the wide-open spaces for the confines of a small jail where a sheriff and his deputies are waiting for the transfer of a prisoner and the anticipated attempt by his brother to break the prisoner out. John Wayne stars, along with Walter Brennan, Dean Martin and Ricky Nelson and Angie Dickinson.

Rosemary's Baby (1968)

With "Rosemary's Baby," writer-director Roman Polanski brought his expressive European style of psychological filmmaking to an intricately plotted, best-selling American novel by Ira Levin, and created a masterpiece of the horror-film genre. The film conveys an increasing sense of unease, claustrophobia and paranoia as the central character (Mia Farrow in her first starring role) comes to believe that a cult of witches is implementing a plot against her and her unborn child. The supporting cast includes John Cassavetes, Ruth Gordon, Sidney Blackmer and Ralph Bellamy. Saying that "a thread of deliberate ambiguity runs throughout the film," Polanski maintains that the film's denouement can be understood in more than one way.

Ruggles of Red Gap (1935)

Charles Laughton takes on comedy in this tale of an English manservant won in a poker game by American Charlie Ruggles, a member of Red Gap, Washington's extremely small social elite. Laughton, in understated valet fashion, worriedly responds: "North America, my lord. Quite an untamed country I understand." However, once in the U.S., he catches the American spirit and becomes a successful businessman. Leo McCarey directed.

Saving Private Ryan (1998)

"Saving Private Ryan" drops ordinary soldiers into a near-impossible rescue mission set amid the carnage of World War II's Omaha Beach landing. In the film's beginning scenes, Spielberg conveyed ultra-realism with harrowing intensity. "Omaha Beach was actually an 'X' setting," says Spielberg, "even worse than 'NC-17,' and I just kind of feel that (I had) to tell the truth about this war at the end of the century, 54 years later. I wasn't going to add my film to a long list of pictures that make World War II 'the glamorous war,' 'the romantic war.' "

Shoes (1916)

Silent era writer-director Lois Weber drew on her experiences as a missionary to create "Shoes," a melodrama heightened by her intent to create a slice of life. Weber's camera documents the daily suffering of an underpaid shopgirl. Combining a reformer's zeal with a flair for storytelling, Weber details Eva's growing desire for the pair of luxurious shoes she passes each day in a shop window. The film, which opens with pages from social worker Jane Addams's sociological study of prostitution, was acclaimed by *Variety* as "a vision of life as it actually is ... devoid of theatricalism."

State Fair (1933)

Henry King directed a superlative vehicle for Will Rogers' homespun persona in this small town slice-of-life setting, which also stars Janet Gaynor, Lew Ayres and Sally Eilers. Enhancing the fair's festivities are diverse storylines rich with Americana and romance -- some long-lasting and some ephemeral, rife with fun but fleeting as the fair itself. The film's authenticity owes much to its director, widely known as the "King of Americana" through films such as "Tol'able David," "Carousel" and "Wait till the Sun Shines, Nellie."

13 Lakes (2004)

James Benning's feature-length film can be seen as a series of moving landscape paintings with artistry and scope that might be compared to Claude Monet's series of water-lily paintings. Embracing the concept of "landscape as a function of time," Benning shot his film at 13 different American lakes in identical 10-minute takes. Each is a static composition: a balance of sky and water in each frame with only the very briefest suggestion of human existence. At each lake, Benning prepared a single shot, selected a single camera position and a specific moment.

Unmasked (1917)

Grace Cunard rivaled daredevils Pearl White ("The Perils of Pauline") and Helen Holmes ("The Hazards of Helen") as America's Serial Queen. In the film, Cunard is a jewel thief pursuing the same wealthy marks as another thief played by Francis Ford. Cunard not only starred in the film, but also wrote its script and parlayed her contributions into a directorial role as well. Produced at Universal Studios, the epicenter of female directors during the silent era, "Unmasked" reflected a style associated with European filmmakers of the time: artful and sophisticated cinematography comprised of complex camera movements and contrasting depths of field.

V-E +1 (1945)

The silent 16 mm footage that makes up "V-E +1" documents the burial of beaten and emaciated Holocaust victims found by Allied forces in the Nazi concentration camp at Falkenau, Czechoslovakia, as World War II ended in Europe. According to Samuel Fuller, who shot the footage while in the infantry unit that liberated the camp, the American commander in charge ordered leading civilians of the town who denied knowledge of the death camp to "prepare the bodies for a decent funeral," parade them on wagons through the town, and bury them with dignity in the town's cemetery.

The Way of Peace (1947)

Frank Tashlin, best known for making comedies with Jerry Lewis and Jayne Mansfield, directed this 18-minute puppet film sponsored by the American Lutheran Church. Punctuated with stories from the Bible, the film's purpose was to reinforce Christian values in the atomic age by condemning the consequences of human conflict with scenes of the crucifixion, lynching and Nazi fascism. Wah Ming Chang created the puppets for the stop-motion animation and also produced the film, which reportedly took 20 months to complete.

Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971)

Roald Dahl adapted his own novel, Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley wrote the musical score, and producer David Wolper cast Gene Wilder as Wonka in this film musical about a contest put on by a candymaker. "Willy Wonka" is surreal yet playful and suffused with Harper Goff's jaw-dropping color sets. Wilder's portrayal Wonka caused theatergoers to like and fear Wonka at the same time, while the hallucinogenic tunnel sequence has traumatized children (and adults) for decades.

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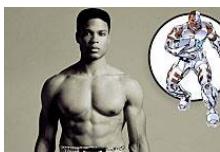
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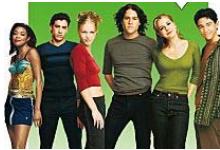
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