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'Saving Private Ryan' among films being preserved

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By BRETT ZONGKER Associated Press WASHINGTON - "Saving Private Ryan" and "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" are among 25 movies being inducted this year into the National Film Registry for long-term preservation, the Library of Congress announced Wednesday.

The library selected films for their cultural, historic or aesthetic qualities. This year's selections span the years 1913 to 2004. They include such familiar and popular titles as "The Big Lebowski" and "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," while others were milestones in film history.

Stephen Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan" from 1998 was chosen in part for its ultra-realism with scenes depicting "war as hell." On a lighter note, the comedy "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" from 1986 was chosen as the first film on the registry from the late director John Hughes. Curators noted Ferris Bueller emerged as one of the great teen heroes of film.

The oldest selection dates to 1913 and is believed to be the earliest surviving feature film starring black actors. Vaudevillian Bert Williams gathered with black performers in New York City to make the film "Bert Williams Lime Kiln Club Field Day." The film was discovered 100 years later in the film vault at the Museum of Modern Art.

The Library of Congress runs a major film preservation effort at its audio-visual conservation center built inside a Cold War-era bunker in Culpeper, Virginia. With this year's additions, the National Film Registry now includes 650 films - a small part of the library's motion picture collection, which contains 1.3 million items.

"By preserving these films, we protect a crucial element of American creativity, culture and history," Librarian of Congress James Billington said in announcing the new selections.

Some of the most endangered films are silent films. A report from the library last year found 70 percent of the nation's silent feature films have been lost and only 14 percent still exist in their original 35 mm format.

The silent films selected for preservation this year include "The Dragon Painter" from 1919, starring Hollywood's first Asian star, Sessue Hayakawa, and the 1916 silent film "Shoes," which examined poverty and prostitution, curators said.

Other films were chosen for their cultural significance. A 1976 independent film entitled "Please Don't Bury Me Alive!" that was chosen for the registry is considered by historians to be the first Chicano feature film. Set in a San Antonio barrio, filmmaker Efrain Gutierrez explored his story as a young Chicano man, questioning his people's place in society at the end of the Vietnam War as thousands of his Latino brethren returned home in coffins. Others faced segregation, poor schools and a justice system that was filling

prisons with Chicanos. The filmmakers were angry with how Hollywood portrayed Mexican Americans.

"We were invisible in our own national culture," Gutierrez said in a written statement. "We were being buried alive."

National Film Preservation Board: <http://www.loc.gov/film>

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