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Cinematic Treasures Named to National Film Registry

“Saving Private Ryan,” “Luxo Jr.” and “Rosemary’s Baby” Among Film Additions

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The horrors of war, the heroism of sacrifice, a vaudeville pioneer, the devil and a master of the macabre represent the diversity of an elite selection of films recognized for their cultural, historic or aesthetic significance. Librarian of Congress James H. Billington announced today the annual selection of 25 motion pictures to be named to the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress. Selection to the registry will help ensure that these films will be preserved for all time.

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

Spanning the period 1913-2004, the films named to the registry include Hollywood classics, documentaries, silent movies, student films, independent and experimental motion pictures. This year’s selections bring the number of films in the registry to 650, which is a small fraction of the Library’s vast moving-image collection of 1.3 million items.

The 2014 registry list includes such iconic movies as “Saving Private Ryan,” a treatise about the harsh realities of war, which earned director Steven Spielberg an Academy Award; the chilling 1968 horror masterpiece “Rosemary’s Baby”; Arthur Penn’s Western saga starring Dustin Hoffman, “Little Big Man”; director John Hughes’ “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off”; and Joel and Ethan Coen’s cult classic, “The Big Lebowski.”

The list also includes John Lasseter’s 1986 animated film, “Luxo Jr.”; the 1953 “House of Wax,” the first full-length 3-D color film produced and released by a major American film studio; 1971’s “Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory,” starring Gene Wilder; Howard Hawks’ 1959 Western “Rio Bravo”; and Charles Laughton comic turn in the 1935 “Ruggles of Red Gap.” Also making the list is Efraín Gutiérrez’s 1976 independent movie, “Please Don’t Bury Me Alive!,” considered by historians to be the first Chicano feature film.

The documentaries and shorts named to the registry include “Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport,” a film examining the rescue operation that placed thousands of Jewish children with foster families in Great Britain prior to World War II; “Felicia,” a 13-minute short that showcases a Watts neighborhood through a teenager’s first-person narrative; and the 1980 “Moon Breath Beat,” created by animator Lisze Bechtold when she was a student at CalArts.

The silent films selected for preservation include “The Dragon Painter,” (1919) starring Hollywood’s first Asian star, Sessue Hayakawa; the 1916 social drama examining poverty and prostitution, “Shoes”; and “Unmasked,” the 1917 film directed and scripted by its star Grace Cunard. Also added to the registry are seven reels of untitled and unassembled footage 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 conclusively determined that 70 percent of the nation’s silent feature films have been lost forever and only 14 percent exist in their original 35 mm format.

Under the terms of the National Film Preservation Act, each year the Librarian of Congress names 25 films to the National Film Registry 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 (NFPB).

The public is urged to make nominations for next year’s registry at the NFPB’s website (www.loc.gov/film).

For each title named to the registry, the Library of Congress Packard Campus for Audio Visual Conservation works to ensure that the film is preserved for future generations, either through the Library’s motion-picture preservation program or through collaborative ventures with other archives, motion-picture studios and independent filmmakers. The Packard Campus is a state-of-the-art facility where the nation’s library acquires, preserves and provides access to the world’s largest and most comprehensive collection of films, television programs, radio broadcasts and sound recordings (www.loc.gov/avconservation).

The Packard Campus is home to more than 7 million collection items. It provides staff support for the Library of Congress National Film Preservation Board, the National Recording Preservation Board and the National Registries for film and recorded sound.

Founded in 1800, the Library of Congress is the nation’s oldest federal cultural institution. It seeks to spark imagination and creativity and to further human understanding and wisdom by providing access to knowledge through its vast collections, programs and exhibitions. Many of the Library’s rich resources can be accessed through its website at www.loc.gov.

2014 National Film Registry

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. The climate, the weather and the season deliver a level of variation to the film, a unique play of light, despite its singularity of composition. Curators of the Rotterdam Film Festival noted, “The power of the film is that the filmmaker teaches the viewer to look better and learn to distinguish the great varieties in the landscape alongside him. [The list of lakes] alone is enough to encompass a treatise on America and its history. A treatise the film certainly encourages, but emphatically does not take part in.” Benning, who studied mathematics and then film at the University of Wisconsin, currently is on the faculty at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts).

Bert Williams Lime Kiln Club Field Day (1913)

In 1913, a stellar cast of African-American performers gathered in the Bronx, New York, to make a feature-length motion picture. The troupe starred vaudevillian Bert Williams, the first African-American to headline on Broadway and the most popular recording artist prior to 1920. After considerable footage was shot, the film was abandoned. One hundred years later, the seven reels of untitled and 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. Modeled after a popular collection of stories known as “Brother Gardener’s Lime Kiln Club,” the plot features three suitors vying to win the hand of the local beauty, portrayed by Odessa Warren Grey. The production also included members of the Harlem stage show known as J. Leubrie Hill’s “Darktown Follies.” Providing insight into early silent-film production (Williams can be seen applying his blackface makeup), these outtakes or rushes show white and black cast and crew working together, enjoying themselves in unguarded moments. Even in fragments of footage, Williams proves himself among the most gifted of screen comedians.

The Big Lebowski (1998)

From the unconventional visionaries Joel & Ethan Coen (the filmmakers behind “Fargo” and “O Brother, Where Art Thou?”) came this 1998 tale of kidnapping, mistaken identity and bowling. As they would again in the 2008 “Burn After Reading,” the Coens explore themes of alienation, inequality and class structure via a group of hard-luck, off-beat characters suddenly drawn into each other’s orbits. Jeff Bridges, in a career-defining role, stars as “The Dude,” an LA-based slacker who shares a last name with a rich man whose arm-candy wife is indebted to shady figures. Joining Bridges are John Goodman, Tara Reid, Julianne Moore, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Steve Buscemi and, in a now-legendary cameo, John Turturro. Stuffed with vignettes—each staged through the Coens’ trademark absurdist, innovative visual style—that are alternately funny and disturbing, “Lebowski” was only middling successful at the box office during its initial release. However, television, the Internet, home video and considerable word-of-mouth have made the film a highly quoted cult classic.

Down Argentine Way (1940)

Betty Grable’s first starring role in a Technicolor musical happened only because Alice Faye had an attack of appendicitis, but Grable took advantage of the situation and quickly made herself as important to 20th Century-Fox as Faye. Released just over a year before America entered World War II, this film and others starring Grable established her as the pinup queen. The title explains much, with 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, like many leading film actors of the time, formed his own production company—Haworth Pictures (combining his name with that of director William Worthington)—to gain more control over his films. “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 who loses his artistic powers after he finds and marries the supposed “dragon princess.” His passion and earlier pursuit of her had consumed him with the urge to create. 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 the unassuming-yet-articulate teenager Felicia Bragg, a high-school student of African-American and Hispanic descent. Felicia's first-person narrative reflects her hopes and frustrations as she annotates footage of her family, school and neighborhood, creating a time capsule that's both historically and culturally significant. Its provenance as an educational film continues today as university courses use "Felicia" to teach documentary filmmaking techniques and cite it as an example of how non-traditional sources, as well as mainstream television news, reflect and influence public opinion.

Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986)

The late John Hughes, the king of both 1980s family comedy ("Home Alone") and teen angst ("Sixteen Candles"), achieved a career highpoint with this funny, heartfelt tale of a teenage wiseacre (Matthew Broderick) whose day playing hooky leads not only to a host of comic misadventures but also, ultimately, to self-realization for both him and his friends. Hughes' manner of depicting late-20th-century youth—their outward and inward lives—finds a successful vehicle in the "everyman" appeal of lead Broderick, whose conning of his parents is really an honest and earnest attempt to help his best friend. With the city of Chicago serving as backdrop and a now-iconic street performance of "Twist and Shout" serving 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 in the film. This is Hughes' first film on the registry.

The Gang's All Here (1943)

Although not remembered as well today as those put out by MGM, 20th Century-Fox's big Technicolor musicals stand up well in comparison. 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 legendary 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 victims' 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 major American film studio. Along with its technical innovations, "House of Wax" also solidified Vincent Price's new role as America's master of the macabre, and his voice resonated even more with the emerging stereophonic sound process. Though he had flirted with the fear genre earlier in his career in the 1946 "Shock," "Wax" forever recast him as one of the first gentlemen of Hollywood horror. Along with Price, Phyllis Kirk, Frank Lovejoy and Carolyn Jones (as one of Price's early victims) complete the cast. André de Toth directed the film.

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. The film examines the bond between parent and child, uncovering the anguish of the parents who reluctantly acknowledged they could no longer protect their children, but through their love saw a chance to protect them, by proxy if not proximity. Interviews with the surviving children reveal feelings of abandonment and estrangement that often took years to overcome. The film is a tribute not only to the children who survived, but to the people of England who agreed to rescue the refugees when U.S. leadership would not.

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, one already well-versed in the white hat-black hat tradition of the typical Hollywood Western saga. Against a backdrop that includes the cavalry, old-time medicine shows, life on the frontier and a climax at Custer's Last Stand, Penn, Hoffman and scriptwriter Calder Willingham (from the novel by Thomas Berger) upend Western motifs while also still skillfully telling a series of remarkable human stories filled with tragedy and humor.

Luxo Jr. (1986)

The iconic living, moving desk lamp that now begins every Pixar motion picture (from "Finding Nemo" to "Monsters, Inc." to "Up") 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 gray balance-arm lamps—one parentally large and one childishly small (the "Junior" of the title)—interact with a brightly colored ball. In strikingly vivid animation, Lasseter and Reeves manage to bring to joyous life these two inanimate objects and to infuse them both with personality and charm—qualities that would become the norm in such soon-to-be Pixar productions as "Toy Story," "Cars" and "WALL-E." Nominated for an Oscar in 1986 for best-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 subject, in 1980 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. Her two-dimensional film was animated to a pre-composed rhythm, the soundtrack cut together afterward, sometimes four frames at a time, to match picture with track, she says. The dream-like story evolved as it was animated, depicting a woman and her two cats and how such forces as birds and the moon impact their lives. Following graduation, Bechtold was the effects animator for the Disney short "The Prince and the Pauper" (1990) and principal effects animator for "FernGully: The Last Rainforest" (1992). Now primarily an author and illustrator, she claims many of her characters were inspired by pets with big personalities, including "Buster the Very Shy Dog," the subject of her series of children's books.

Please Don't Bury Me Alive! (1976)

The San Antonio barrio in the early 1970s is the setting for writer, director and star Efraín Gutiérrez's independent piece, considered by historians to be the first Chicano feature film. A self-taught filmmaker, 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 where it filled theaters in Chicano neighborhoods. He tells his story in the turbulent days near the end of the Vietnam War, as a young Chicano man questioning his and his people's place in society as thousands of his Latino brethren return from the war in coffins. 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. ..." Cultural historians often compare Gutiérrez to Oscar Micheaux, the pioneering African-American filmmaker who came to prominence in the 1920s.

The Power and the Glory (1933)

Preston Sturges' first original screenplay, "The Power and the Glory," is a haunting tragedy in sharp contrast to the comedies of the 1940s that established him as one of America's foremost writer-directors. Contrary to common practice of the time, Sturges wrote the film as a complete shooting script, which producer Jesse L. Lasky, believing it "the most perfect script I'd ever seen," ordered director William K. Howard to film as written. Compared favorably to novels by Henry James and Joseph Conrad for its extensive mix of narration with dramatic action (Fox Studios coined the word "narratage" to publicize Sturges' innovative technique), "The Power and the Glory" introduced a non-chronological structure to mainstream movies that was said to influence "Citizen Kane." Like that film, "The Power and the Glory" 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. The Nation magazine called Spencer Tracy's performance in the lead role "one of the fullest characterizations ever achieved on screen."

Rio Bravo (1959)

As legend goes, 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 equally unlawful brother to break the prisoner out. John Wayne stars as sheriff John T. Chance and is aided in his efforts to keep the law by Walter Brennan, Dean Martin and Ricky Nelson. Angie Dickinson is the love interest and Western regulars Claude Akins, Ward Bond and Pedro Gonzalez are also featured. A smart Western where gunplay is matched by wordplay, "Rio Bravo" is a terrific ensemble piece and director Hawks' last great film.

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. Set in the sprawling Dakota apartment building on New York's Central Park West, the film conveys an increasing sense of unease, claustrophobia and paranoia as the central character, convincingly played by Mia Farrow in her first starring role, comes to believe that a cult of witches in the building is implementing a plot against her and her unborn child. The supporting cast that Polanski assembled—John Cassavetes as Rosemary's husband, Ruth Gordon and Sidney Blackmer as their neighbors, and Ralph Bellamy as her doctor—portray believably banal New Yorkers who gain nearly total control over Rosemary's daily life during her pregnancy. Insistent 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, known for such serious roles as Nero, King Henry XIII and later as the 1935 Captain Bligh, 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 America, he finds not uncouth backwoodsmen, but rather a more egalitarian society that soon has Laughton reciting the Gettysburg Address, catching the American spirit and becoming a successful businessman. Aided by comedy stalwarts ZaSu Pitts and Roland Young, Laughton really shows his acting range and pulls off comedy perfectly. It didn't hurt that Leo McCarey, who had just worked with W.C. Fields and would next guide Harold Lloyd, was in the director's chair. McCarey, who could pull heartstrings or touch funny bones with equal skill, started his long directorial career working with such comedy icons as Laurel & Hardy and created several beloved American films.

Saving Private Ryan (1998)

Through the years, Hollywood's take on war, honor and heroism has taken many conflicting forms. "Saving Private Ryan" drops ordinary soldiers into a near-impossible rescue mission set amid the carnage of World War II's Omaha Beach landing. The film's beginning scenes vividly show us "war is hell," as William T. Sherman said. 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)

Renowned silent era writer-director Lois Weber drew on her experiences as a missionary to create "Shoes," a masterfully crafted melodrama heightened by Weber's intent to create, as she noted in an interview, "a slice out of real life." Weber's camera empathetically documents the suffering her central character, an underpaid shoppgirl struggling to support her family, endures daily—standing all day behind a shop counter, walking in winter weather in shoes that provided no protection, stepping on a nail that pierces her flesh. Combining a Progressive era reformer's zeal to document social problems with a vivid flair for visual storytelling, Weber details Eva's growing desire for the pair of luxurious shoes she passes each day in a shop window, her self-examination in a cracked mirror after she agrees to go out with a cabaret tout to acquire the shoes, her repugnance as the man puts his hands on her body, and her shame as she breaks down in tears while displaying her newly acquired goods to her mother. 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)

For director Henry King to create a film that celebrated an institution as beloved and indomitable as the State Fair, it required the presence of a cherished and steadfast star—in this case, icon, philosopher and America's favorite cowboy, Will Rogers. Rogers found a superlative vehicle for his homespun persona in this small town slice-of-life setting. He is assisted by Janet Gaynor (already the Academy's very first best-actress winner), Lew Ayres and Sally Eilers. Enhancing the fair's festivities, which include the making of mom's entry for the cook-off and the fattening-up of the family pig, 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."

Unmasked (1917)

At the time "Unmasked" was released, 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, brother of director John Ford and himself a director and character actor. Cunard, in the mode of many women filmmakers of that era, 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. With a plot rich in female initiative and problem-solving, Cunard fashioned a strong character who does not fit the image of traditional womanhood: she relishes her heists, performs unladylike physical exploits, manipulates court evidence, carries on with a man who is not her husband and yet survives the film without punishment. In essence, the character Cunard created echoed the woman behind the camera. Today, "Unmasked" serves as a succinct but illustrative example of the role of women in film history, as depicted in fact and fiction.

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. Fuller later became an acclaimed maverick writer-director known for crafting films that entertained, but nevertheless forced audiences to confront challenging societal issues. After making "The Big Red One," a fictionalized version of his war experiences that included scenes set in Falkenau, Fuller unearthed his "V-E + 1" footage and returned to Falkenau to comment on the experience for the French documentary "Falkenau: The Impossible Years."

The Way of Peace (1947)

Frank Tashlin, best known for making comedies with pop icons like Jerry Lewis or 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, a visual-effects artist who specialized in designing fantastic models, characters and props, created the puppets for the stop-motion animation and also produced the film, which reportedly took 20 months to complete. The film is narrated by actor Lew Ayres, who starred in the anti-war film "All Quiet on the Western Front" (1930). He was so influenced by that experience, that he became a vocal advocate for peace and famously declared himself a conscientious objector during World War II. The Reverend H. K. Rasbach, a frequent adviser on big-budget films such as "The Ten Commandments" and "The Greatest Story Ever Told," provided technical supervision and story concept. The film premiered at Constitution Hall in Washington D.C., with more than 2,700 in attendance, including members of Congress, representatives of the Supreme Court and 750 leaders from various branches of government.

Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971)

Author Roald Dahl adapted his own novel, Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley wrote a memorable musical score, and producer David Wolper wisely cast Gene Wilder as Wonka in this film musical about a contest put on by an often-sadistic candymaker. Harkening back to the classic Hollywood musicals, "Willy Wonka" is surreal, yet playful at the same time, and suffused with Harper Goff's jaw-dropping color sets, which richly live up to the fanciful world found in one of the film's signature songs, "Pure Imagination." Wilder's brilliant portrayal of the enigmatic Wonka caused theatergoers to like and fear Wonka at the same time, while the hallucinogenic tunnel sequence has traumatized children (and adults) for decades, their nightmares indelibly emblazoned in memory like the scariest scenes from "The Wizard of Oz."

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