

Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden announced today the annual selection of 25 motion pictures that have been inducted into the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress because of their cultural, historic or aesthetic importance. This year's titles range from the Disney animated blockbuster "The Lion King" and the seminal coming-of-age drama "The Breakfast Club" to the 1990 documentary "Paris Is Burning," chronicling the pageantry of drag balls in New York City, and a collection of home movies showcasing African-American life in Oklahoma during the 1920s.

"Motion pictures document our history and culture and serve as a mirror of our collective experiences," said Hayden. "The National Film Registry embraces the richness and diversity of film as an art form and celebrates the people who create the magic of cinema."

Under the terms of the National Film Preservation Act, each year the Librarian of Congress names to the National Film Registry 25 motion pictures that are "culturally, historically or aesthetically" significant. The films must be at least 10 years old. The Librarian makes the annual registry selections after conferring with the distinguished members of the National Film Preservation Board (NFPB) and a cadre of Library specialists. Thousands of public nominations are also considered. Nominations for next year will be accepted through the fall at [loc.gov/programs/national-film-preservation-board/film-registry/nominate/](http://loc.gov/programs/national-film-preservation-board/film-registry/nominate/).

In addition to advising the Librarian of Congress on the annual selection of titles to the National Film Registry, the board also provides counsel on national preservation planning policy. In that capacity, it issued the following statement: "The National Film Preservation Board continued to focus much of its attention this year on the recognition of photochemical film as a distinct medium. Emerging digital technologies offer many alternative opportunities in capture and exhibition, but the board encourages the preservation of film on film. It also applauds those efforts in education and exhibition that stimulate an appreciation of the work of the archives in preserving our classic cinema. Film remains the best existing archival medium and the board encourages archives and rights-holders to continue to preserve titles on film as they have done in the past."

Spanning the period 1903 to 1998, the films named to this year's registry include Hollywood blockbusters, documentaries, silent movies, animation, shorts, independent and experimental motion pictures. The 2016 selections bring the number of films in the registry to 700, which is a small fraction of the Library's vast moving-image collection of 1.3 million items.

## 2016 National Film Registry

### The Atomic Cafe (1982)

Produced and directed by Kevin Rafferty, Jayne Loader and Pierce Rafferty, the influential film compilation “Atomic Cafe” provocatively documents the post-World War II threat of nuclear war as depicted in a wide assortment of archival footage from the period (newsreels, statements from politicians, advertisements, training, civil defense and military films). This vast, yet entertaining, collage of clips serves as a unique document of the 1940s-1960s era and illustrates how these films—some of which today seem propagandistic or even patently absurd (“The House in the Middle”)—were used to inform the public on how to cope in the nuclear age.

### Ball of Fire (1941)

In this Howard Hawks-directed screwball comedy, showgirl and gangster’s moll Sugarpuss O’Shea (Barbara Stanwyck) hides from the law among a group of scholars compiling an encyclopedia. Cooling her heels until the heat lets up, Sugarpuss charms the elderly academics and bewitches the young professor in charge (Gary Cooper). Hawks deftly shapes an effervescent, innuendo-packed Billy Wilder-Charles Brackett script into a swing-era version of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs or “squirrely cherubs,” as Sugarpuss christens them. Filled with colorful period slang and boogie-woogie tunes and highlighted by an energetic performance from legendary drummer Gene Krupa, the film captures a pre-World War II lightheartedness.

### The Beau Brummels (1928)

Al Shaw and Sam Lee were an eccentrically popular vaudeville act of the 1920s. In 1928, they made this eight-minute Vitaphone short for Warner Bros. The duo later appeared in more than a dozen other films, though none possessed the wacky charm of “The Beau Brummels.” As critic Jim Knipfel has observed: “If Samuel Beckett had written a vaudeville routine, he would have created Shaw and Lee.” Often considered one of the quintessential vaudeville comedy shorts, the film has a simple set-up—Shaw and Lee stand side by side with deadpan expressions in non-tailored suits and bowler hats as they deliver their comic routine of corny nonsense songs and gags with a bit of soft shoe and their renowned hat-swapping routine. Shaw and Lee’s reputation has enjoyed a recent renaissance and their brand of dry, offbeat humor is seen by some as well ahead of its time. The film has been preserved by the UCLA Film and Television Archive.

### The Birds (1963)

Alfred Hitchcock's four sequential masterpieces—"Vertigo," "North by Northwest," "Psycho" and "The Birds"—revealed a director who had reached the pinnacle of his craft. In "The Birds," Hitchcock transfixed both critics and mass audiences by deftly moving from anxiety-inducing horror to glossy entertainment and suspense, with bold forays into psychological terrain. Marked by a foreboding sense of an unending terror no one can escape, the film concludes with its famous final scene, which only adds to the emotional impact of "The Birds."

### Blackboard Jungle (1955)

In a 1983 interview, writer-director Richard Brooks claimed that hearing Bill Haley and the Comets' "Rock Around the Clock" in 1954 inspired him to make a rock & roll-themed picture. The result was "Blackboard Jungle," an adaptation of the controversial novel by Evan Hunter about an inner-city schoolteacher (played in the film by Glenn Ford) tackling juvenile delinquency and the lamentable state of public education— common bugaboos of the Eisenhower era. Retaining much of the novel's gritty realism, the film effectively dramatizes the social issues at hand and features outstanding early performances by Sidney Poitier and Vic Morrow. The film, however, packs its biggest wallop even before a word of dialogue is spoken. As the opening credits roll, Brooks' original inspiration for the film - the pulsating strains of "Rock Around the Clock" - blasts across theater speakers, bringing the devil's music to Main Street and epitomizing American culture worldwide.

### The Breakfast Club (1985)

John Hughes, who had previously given gravitas to the angst of adolescence in his 1984 film, "Sixteen Candles," further explored the social politics of high school in this comedy/character study produced one year later. Set in a daylong Saturday detention hall, the film offers an assortment of American teenage archetypes such as the "nerd," "jock" and "weirdo." Over the course of the day, labels and default personas slip away as members of this motley group actually talk to each other and learn about each other and themselves. "The Breakfast Club" is a comedy that delivers a message with laughs. Thirty years later, the movie's message is still vivid. Written and directed by Hughes, the film's cast includes Molly Ringwald, Anthony Michael Hall, Judd Nelson, Emilio Estevez and Ally Sheedy.

### The Decline of Western Civilization (1981)

Director Penelope Spheeris' controversial documentary about the Los Angeles hard-core punk rock scene circa 1980 was perceived as shocking by some, even prompting L.A. police chief

Daryl Gates to request banning all screenings of the film. Despite the qualms, the work remains a bracing historical and musical record of that culture, mixing outrageous performances and whirling mosh-pits with far more restrained interviews. Featured bands include Black Flag, Fear, X, The Germs and Circle Jerks. Scenes of older club owners making game attempts to describe this new type of music prove comic highlights. Spheeris made two other musical documentaries in this trilogy, chronicling the hair-metal and gutter-punk scenes, and—in a definite change of pace—the 1992 “Wayne’s World.”

#### East of Eden (1955)

Director Elia Kazan and screenwriter Paul Osborn fashioned John Steinbeck’s classic Cain-and-Abel allegory into a screen actor’s showcase. Though much abbreviated from Steinbeck’s sprawling epic, Kazan capitalizes on the teen angst theme popular in the ‘50s and artfully builds tension between the troubled, rebellious Cal (James Dean) vying against “good” brother Aron (Richard Davalos) for the love of their taciturn father (Raymond Massey). In his autobiography, Kazan described how he achieved the familial dynamics: “I didn’t conceal from Jimmy or from Ray what they thought of each other. The screen was alive with precisely what I wanted: They detested each other.” Dean received a posthumous Oscar nomination for his performance. Jo Van Fleet won an Oscar for her raw portrayal as the boys’ estranged mother.

#### Funny Girl (1968)

Reprising her Tony-nominated performance as legendary singer-comedienne Fanny Brice, Barbra Streisand’s impressive vocal talent and understated acting, as guided by distinguished veteran director William Wyler, earned her an Academy Award for her screen debut. The film retains most of the stage show’s Jule Styne-Bob Merrill musical numbers including “People,” “I’m the Greatest Star” and “Don’t Rain on My Parade.” Streisand plays Brice as a plain-looking, fast-talking dynamo who yearns for the stage, and gets her chance when she’s hired by impresario Florenz Ziegfeld (Walter Pidgeon) and becomes the toast of Broadway. She meets and marries big-time gambler Nick Arnstein (Omar Sharif), but their idyllic romance crumbles as he grows to resent her fame. Produced by Ray Stark, Brice’s real-life son-in-law, “Funny Girl” was among the last of the successful big-budget musicals.

#### Life of an American Fireman (1903)

Film historian Charles Musser hails this as a seminal work in American cinema, among the most innovative in terms of editing, storytelling and the relationship between shots. Edwin S. Porter was an influential pioneer in the development of early American cinema and “Life of an

"American Fireman" provides a superb snapshot of how advanced U.S. filmmaking had become. Porter followed up several months later with "The Great Train Robbery." Ironically, "Life of an American Fireman" later became a controversial topic in American film historiography when a re-edited, more modern version of the film using cross-cutting techniques was thought to be the original. Many years later, scholars helped disprove this misconception by reviewing the original paper print copyright deposit in the Library of Congress.

#### The Lion King (1994)

Disney Studios further solidified its position as the producer of modern-day animated masterpieces with this lyrical 1994 offering. The story of a young lion cub destined to become King of the Jungle, but first exiled by his evil uncle, "The Lion King" was a triumph from the moment of its release and has charmed new generations of viewers. Like Disney's beloved "Bambi," "The Lion King" seamlessly blends innovative animation with excellent voice-actors (Jonathan Taylor Thomas, James Earl Jones, Moira Kelly, Nathan Lane, Matthew Broderick and Whoopi Goldberg) and catchy, now-classic songs by Sir Elton John and Tim Rice. It is the film's storytelling that resonates—funny, innovative, suspenseful—for both children and adults. Since its release, the film has spawned an animated TV series, two made-for-video sequels and a highly imaginative Broadway show.

#### Lost Horizon (1937)

Frank Capra's big-budget romantic fantasy "Lost Horizon" (based on the James Hilton novel) offered an emotional respite to an American public seeking escape from the Depression and yearning for their own personal utopias. Through the book and film, the term Shangri-La became a household word. In the story, dashing diplomat Ronald Colman and a group of plane passengers are kidnapped and taken for mysterious reasons to a remote valley in the Himalayas where they find a seemingly blissful paradise, refuge from a world on the precipice of war. Along with memorable adventure, "Lost Horizon" stands out for its stunning cinematography and fantastic, extravagant sets, a hallmark of the Golden Age of Hollywood.

#### The Musketeers of Pig Alley (1912)

Considered the first gangster film, this 17-minute early work by director D.W. Griffith is also noteworthy for employing several innovative camera techniques. Cameramen of the era typically kept the entire frame in focus, but Griffith instructed cinematographer Billy Bitzer to place the subject of a scene in sharp focus while muting the background, a technique common in classical paintings, but unheard-of in films of that era. The film also introduced

off-center framing—positioning the subject at the edge of the frame instead of dead center—to achieve greater visual and emotional impact. The cast members, filmed with such revolutionary camerawork, included one of Griffith’s most famous discoveries, Lillian Gish, and her sister, Dorothy, as well as Lionel Barrymore, Donald Crisp, Harry Carey and Antonio Moreno, all of whom would go on to long careers in sound films. The film has been preserved by the Museum of Modern Art Department of Film and can be viewed at [mo.ma/musketeers](http://mo.ma/musketeers).

#### Paris Is Burning (1990)

In a 2015 article in *The Guardian*, Ashley Clark noted, “Few documentaries can claim to have sparked as much discussion and controversy as Jennie Livingston’s debut ‘Paris is Burning,’ the vibrant time capsule of New York’s ballroom subculture in the ‘80s.” The film explores the complex subculture of fashion shows and vogue dance competitions among black and Hispanic gay men, drag queens and transgender women in Manhattan. It shifts among ballroom contests and shows and interviews with contestants, who belong to different “houses” that are like families to them, sharing their views on wealth, notions of beauty, racism and gender orientation.

#### Point Blank (1967)

If ever there is a Mount Rushmore for tough guys, the face of Lee Marvin should be sculpted there in bold relief. He definitely upholds that reputation in the relentless crime drama “Point Blank.” Based on a novel by Donald Westlake (writing as Richard Stark), this tense, stylish thriller from director John Boorman opens with Walker (Marvin) getting double-crossed by mobster friend John Vernon while conducting a crime on Alcatraz Island. Shot, left for dead, and now missing \$93,000, Marvin soon learns that his wife was also romantically involved with Vernon. Writing for *Slant* in 2003, critic Nick Schager frames the film as a reworking of traditional noir: “Boorman set out to make a thriller that looked and felt like nothing else before it, using widescreen Panavision cinematography, explosive colors, and a multi-layered soundtrack to re-envision the noir picture as highbrow Euro-art film.” “Point Blank” has come to be recognized as a seminal film of the 1960s.

#### The Princess Bride (1987)

The 1980s produced many feel-good movies and “The Princess Bride” is one of the decade’s most beloved. Adapting his popular 1973 novel for the screen, William Goldman collaborated with director Rob Reiner to craft a lighthearted parody of classic fairy tales that retains the writer’s wit and memorable characters and adds bravura performances and a barrage of oft-quoted dialogue. It is a joyride filled with assorted storybook figures like the beautiful title

character (Robin Wright), her dashing true love (Cary Elwes), makers of magic spells (Billy Crystal and Carol Kane) and a rhyming colossus (Andre the Giant). As the devious Vizzini, Wallace Shawn incredulously exclaims “Inconceivable!” at every turn. Swashbuckling Mandy Patinkin dreams of avenging family honor and someday declaring, “Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die!” The film continues to delight audiences, drawing new generations of fans.

#### Putney Swope (1969)

When writer-director Robert Downey Sr.’s surrealistic satire of Madison Avenue and black power, “Putney Swope,” opened in July 1969, New York Times critic Vincent Canby characterized it as “funny, sophomoric, brilliant, obscene, disjointed, marvelous, unintelligible and relevant,” while New York Daily News reviewer Wanda Hale damned it as “the most offensive picture I’ve ever seen.” A cult classic from an earlier time, Downey’s wildly irreverent underground breakout film presents hilarious vignettes of an ad agency takeover by black nationalists. Although noting that power ultimately corrupts the militants, Henry Louis Gates Jr. reminisced that he and fellow black students at Yale loved the film as a utopian fantasy that offered them a realistic path—infiltration, then transformation—for social change.

#### Rushmore (1998)

Director Wes Anderson’s indie film “Rushmore,” a work filled with incisive detail to pop sensitivities, remains a cultural milestone of Gen X and millennials. Geeky misfit Jason Schwartzman tries to escape the stigma of being wildly unpopular at Rushmore Academy by becoming the king of extracurricular activities, nearly flunking out in the process. He makes bizarre, unsuccessful attempts to woo elementary schoolteacher Olivia Williams and has a chaotic, up-and-down relationship with wealthy businessman-mentor Bill Murray. This was Anderson’s second film, following the unexpected success of his debut, “Bottle Rocket.” In a 1999 interview with the New York Times, Anderson and screenwriter Owen Wilson described their cinematic approach: “We’re interested in characters who have enthusiasm,” and “We wanted to have ‘Rushmore’ become its own slightly heightened reality, like a Roald Dahl children’s book.”

#### Solomon Sir Jones films (1924-28)

Solomon Sir Jones was a Baptist minister and businessman who also had an important career as an accomplished amateur filmmaker. Jones was born in Tennessee to former slaves and grew up in the South before moving to Oklahoma in 1889. As described on its website, Yale

University's collection of Solomon Sir Jones films consists of 29 silent black-and-white films documenting African-American communities in Oklahoma from 1924 to 1928. They contain 355 minutes of footage shot with then-new 16-mm cameras. The films document a rich tapestry of everyday life: funerals, sporting events, schools, parades, businesses, Masonic meetings, river baptisms, families at home, African-American oil barons and their wells, black colleges, Juneteenth celebrations and a transcontinental footrace. Jones also documented his travels. IndieWire termed these films "the most extensive film records we have of Southern and urban black life and culture at the time of rapid social and cultural change for African-Americans during the 1920s, the very beginning of the Great Migration, which transformed not only black people as a whole, but America itself." The Smithsonian also has nine reels of film, comprising approximately two hours of footage. The films have been preserved by Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

#### Steamboat Bill, Jr. (1928)

If Charlie Chaplin can be called the "poet" of American comedy and Harold Lloyd its "everyman," Buster Keaton can best be seen as an ingenious craftsman. Born in Piqua, Kansas to vaudevillian parents, Keaton as a toddler was given the name "Buster" by Harry Houdini, according to legend, for his ability to survive falls. Keaton's fame rests on his array of work from 1920 to 1928 when, in both shorts and feature films, he displayed a seamless mastery of film comic technique, from superb cinematography and editing to brilliant, intricately visual gags. "Steamboat Bill, Jr." opens with ship captain Steamboat Bill (Ernest Torrence) awaiting the arrival of his long-unseen son (Buster Keaton) whom he hopes to groom as his successor. Keaton, fresh from Boston schooling, turns out to be a dandy wearing a striped blazer and sporting a ukulele. Impatient parent Torrence wearily begins the daunting makeover. The film is remembered for its breath-stopping stunts and cyclone finale. After making the film, Keaton made a disastrous move to MGM, which, combined with personal difficulties, ended his productive career.

#### Suzanne, Suzanne (1982)

This insightful 30-minute documentary profiles a young black woman, Suzanne Browning, as she confronts a legacy of physical abuse and its role in her descent into substance abuse. The film was conceived by Browning's aunt, Camille Billops, as a sort of cinematic drug intervention. Family remembrances revealed the truth behind the addiction: Suzanne and her mother were victims of domestic abuse at the hands of the family patriarch. Armed with the



key to her own self-destructive behavior, Suzanne struggles to understand her father's brutality and her mother's passive complicity. After years of silence, Suzanne and her mother are finally able to share their painful experiences with each other in an intensely moving moment of truth. Directed by Billops and James Hatch, this film essay captures the essence of a black middle-class family in crisis.

#### Thelma & Louise (1991)

Screenwriter Callie Khouri began her script for "Thelma & Louise" with a single-sentence premise: "Two women go on a crime spree." What emerged, from her word processor and eventually from the screen, became a feminist manifesto and a cultural flashpoint that eventually landed the film's stars, in character, onto the cover of "Time" magazine. Anchored by two career-defining performances from Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis (and a breakout early appearance by Brad Pitt), "Thelma & Louise" skillfully contrasts action-movie themes with a social commentary before building to an unforgettable climax. Directed by Ridley Scott, "Thelma & Louise" has become a symbol of feminism.

#### 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1916)

Directed by Stuart Paton, the film was touted as "the first submarine photoplay." Universal spent freely on location, shooting in the Bahamas and building life-size props, including the submarine, and taking two years to film. J. E. Williamson's "photosphere," an underwater chamber connected to an iron tube on the surface of the water, enabled Paton to film underwater scenes up to depths of 150 feet. The film is based on Jules Verne's "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" and to a lesser extent, "The Mysterious Island." The real star of the film is its special effects. Although they may seem primitive by today's standards, 100 years ago they dazzled contemporary audiences. It was the first time the public had an opportunity to see reefs, various types of marine life and men mingling with sharks. It was also World War I, and submarine warfare was very much in the public consciousness, so the life-size submarine gave the film an added dimension of reality. The film was immensely popular with audiences and critics.

#### A Walk in the Sun (1945)

Though better known for his World War I masterpiece "All Quiet on the Western Front," director Lewis Milestone also directed the World War II classic "A Walk in the Sun." The film (Robert Rossen adapted the excellent script from the Harry Brown novel) tells the story of a group of men and "how they came across the sea to sunny Italy and took a little walk in the sun." The walk here is the struggle the platoon faces after surviving a beach landing near

Salerno, Italy, and then having to fight their way a few miles toward a bridge and fortified farmhouse held by the Nazis. “Walk in the Sun” forgoes the usual focus of war movies on fierce battle scenes for an episodic, perceptive character study of the men in the platoon, interspersed with sharp, random bursts of violence. The frequent conversations among the soldiers reveal the emotional stress they go through when faced with the day-to-day uncertainties of war, constant peril and the fear of death.

#### Who Framed Roger Rabbit (1988)

Described by Roger Ebert as “not only great entertainment but a breakthrough in craftsmanship,” “Who Framed Roger Rabbit” introduced a new sense of realism into the interactions between cartoons and live-action characters on screen. In this film noir comedy, set in a 1940s Hollywood where cartoon characters are real, private investigator Eddie Valiant (Bob Hoskins) is hired to prove the innocence of the accused murderer and uncontrollably crazy ‘toon’ Roger Rabbit (voiced by Charles Fleischer), with memorable appearances by Roger’s voluptuous wife, Jessica Rabbit (voiced by Kathleen Turner), and the chillingly evil Judge Doom (Christopher Lloyd). The film evokes a love for the golden age of animation, represented through the construction of Roger Rabbit himself, who embodies Disney’s high-quality animation, Warner Bros.’ character design and Tex Avery’s sense of humor. The spirit of the film is artfully summarized in this one line: “I’m not bad, I’m just drawn that way.” Executive producer Steven Spielberg worked tirelessly to negotiate the use of over 140 beloved cartoon characters in the film, making this the first time Warner Bros. and Disney characters shared the screen and the last time Mel Blanc voiced Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck before his death in 1989.

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