



While the symbiote was trying to leap out of the back of my skull this holiday season, one of my favorite events happened. The National Film Registry announced its 25 new additions. Every year, 25 more films are added, and while I was sleepless, dealing with the lump back there, I missed writing about the Registry.

So now, I am doing it.

The big deal on this list, for me at least, is Thriller. The first real music video to be added to the list and I've had it on my nomination list for several years now. My guess is that Jackson's death, along with a number of folks putting it on their list (though I still think I had a little something to do with it!) got it onto the Registry. The role of music videos needed to be acknowledged. There are only two concert films that I know of on the list: The T.A.M.I Show and Marion Anderson's concert at the Lincoln Memorial. They really need to put Gimme Shelter, Cocksucker Blues, and especially, Talking Heads' Stop Making Sense. They still need to add a couple of music videos (My recs: Minnie the Moocher from Cab Calloway and His Orchestra as well as Sabotage by The Beastie Boys and Michael Jackson's Black or White for the innovative use of morphing).

This year's list is a strong one which I believe was in response to a lot of criticism about missing areas of film on the Registry. I think it's a great list, and I think you'll agree.

#### Dog Day Afternoon (1975)



Sidney Lumet directed this heist film where the heist goes sideways. There's so much behind it, about how the robbery was to pay for sexual reassignment surgery and all the wonderful little details of an actual robbery that took place in 1972. The funny thing is that this was the film with perhaps the greatest cast of the time. Charles Durning, Chris Sarrandon (who is one of the great underrated film actors of the last forty years), Lance Henriksen, and the late, great John Cazale. I've seen this film about three times, never on a big screen, but I have to say it's one of the great films of the 1970s. It really helped cement Pacino's standing as one of the great actors of his generation and it also featured a great performance from Cazale. The funny thing about Cazale, who was largely a stage actor, is that he did about five films, all of them nominated for Best Picture.

#### The Exiles (1961)

Director Kent MacKenzie made a film about Native American twenty-somethings that left the reservation and settled in a run-down portion of Los Angeles. I heard of this one when I was in elementary school. Since I did the monthly Indian Education programme, being 1/8 Ohlone, our teacher had seen it and when I mentioned that I loved movies, she asked if I had ever seen any movies with positive Native American themes. I was 12, so I couldn't come up with any, but she mentioned The Exiles and a couple of others. It never found a distributor, but it was revived in 2008 at the Berlin Film Festival, and I believe that's what got it on the list. I've still never seen it.

#### Heroes All (1920)

A good documentary that I've never seen whole, but I've seen not one, but THREE experimental films which used snippets from the film to drive home their point. The original documentary made by the Red Cross showed the treatment of World War I soldiers at Walter Reed Hospital. The three that were made recently used the images and contrasted it with modern coverage. I'm going to go out of my way to get a look at the whole thing.

### Hot Dogs for Gauguin (1972)

Quite possibly the most famous student film of all-time. Martin Brest, who would go on to direct films like Beverly Hills Cop and Scent of A Woman, directed Danny DeVito and Rhea Perlman in a funny little movie where a photographer decides he wants to record magic with his camera...so he plans to blow-up the Statue of Liberty. I saw this one when I was at Emerson and thought it was a lot of fun. I'm not 100% sure, but this might be the first student film on the Registry.

### The Incredible Shrinking Man (1957)

The Shrinking Man by Richard Matheson provides the basis for this one that spawned at least two reworkings (the Incredible Shrinking Women with Lily Tomlin being one of my faves. I have no idea how many times I've seen this one. At least ten times over the years. It's really not that great a picture. I mean, it's full of fun tricks, but it's a light and fluffy 1950s science fiction picture. That's not to say that there weren't great SF flicks in the 50s, Forbidden Planet comes to mind right off, but this was the flavor of vanilla as far as I'm concerned.



### Jezebel (1928)

William Wyler. There is no director in history who had a better eye. Bette Davis is, without question, the greatest actress in the history of American Cinema. I'll say that the three women in her league, Kathryn Hepburn, Joan Crawford and Meryl Streep, are great, but none of them touch her. This was her third best film, and the only one which really allowed her to shine with Henry Fonda. Fonda brought out the best in her. I've seen this one on the big screen a couple of times.

### The Jungle (1967)

This is another student-type film. Temple University professor Harold Haskins sent his students out to make a film about gangs. That's as much as I know about the actual film. I know in a series at UCLA on Gangs and the Inner City they used The Jungle along with Colors and a couple of other films. I'm going to have to find this one.

### The Lead Shoes (1949)

This is an interesting pick, and one that I knew would be in eventually once I saw it. It's Sidney Peterson, one of the great Avant-Garde directors of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He founded Workshop 20 at the California School of Fine Arts and made some of the most significant Surrealist films of the 1940s and 50s. This one uses a series of distorting lenses, which adds to the sense of what is projected being of The Other. It's a film that disturbs somewhat. Peterson was one of the great Bay Area filmmakers.

### Little Nemo (1911)

I've never seen this one, but it is Winsor McCay's first piece of animation. It's an 11 minute film with two minutes of animation based on McCay's Little Nemo in Slumberland comic strip. McCay's best-known work is Gertie The Dinosaur, which is already on the Registry. I'm fairly certain in the next ten years or so we'll see The Sinking of the Lusitania, McCay's animated documentary, on the Registry.

### Mabel's Blunder (1914)

Mabel Normand's career was ruined in part by the murder of William Desmond Taylor (and if you want to know more about that, check out <http://www.taylorology.com/>) and in part by her massive drug habit and tuberculosis. She was a helluva comedienne. I've never seen this one, though I've seen other films with her in them. It was directed by Mack Sennet, who was Normand's lover at the time.

### The Mark of Zorro (1940)

The definitive Zorro film. Tyrone Power, Basil Rathbone, Linda Darnell, this film had every element right. I watched this for the first time as a kid on Dialing for Dollars (with Pat McCormick!) and then again in High School when I went on my first big silent film kick. It buckles some serious swash and is an absolute blast. Oddly, the 1920 version with Douglas Fairbanks is not on the Registry, which makes this the first remake to make it onto the registry before the original. No wait, that's not true. Snow White and the Seven Dwarves did it first.



### Mrs. Miniver (1942)

Another Wyler film, and this one might be his masterpiece in that he didn't have nearly as much to work with as he did in Jezebel. Greer Garson was no Bette Davis, and Walter Pidgeon is no Henry Fonda, but Wyler got great performances out of both of them. I know, there are people who loved Greer Garson, and she did some good stuff, but she never managed to rise above the material the way the greats manage to. That's why Christopher Lee is the greatest actor of all-time. He's been amazing in some true clunkers. The film is lovely and I had thought it was on the list a long time ago.

### The Muppet Movie (1979)

This is an awesome choice, and one I never saw coming. Jim Henson's contribution to film and television is seldom given its fair shake. He introduced puppets as characters in the world in a way no other puppeteer had done. The Muppet Show is one of the greatest variety shows of all-time, and there is no doubt that the Muppet Movie was the peak of

Henson's creative prowess. From brilliant guest stars (including Orson Welles as a Studio Head, which is a delicious piece of irony!) to wonderful songs to magnificent dialogue between Muppets and humans. The ultimate road movie for the 6 to 10 year old set, with a fine bit for those of us just a little bit older.

#### Once Upon a Time in the West (1968)

The story to Once Upon a Time in the West was conceived by an interesting trio: Dario Argento, Bernardo Bertolucci and director Sergio Leone. It starred Henry Fonda, Jason Robards, Claudia Cardinale and Charles Bronson, with Woody Strode and Jack Elam in supporting roles. In many ways, it is the most powerful western I've ever seen. The ending is depressing, with Robards doing some of his best work. This is a western you've got to see. The peak of the Spaghetti Westerns.

#### Pillow Talk (1959)

Rock Hudson and Doris Day. You can't argue with those two. Towards the end of Hudson's life, there was an interview with Day and Hudson on Entertainment Tonight. Rock asked Doris which was her favorite of their films and she said, without hesitation, Pillow talk. It's also the film that's most responsible for one of my favorite films of the last decade, Down With Love. Thelma Ritter is great, and Tony Randall is fantastic. Hudson and Day are great as a pair. If you haven't seen this one, go out and rent it.

#### Precious Images (1986)

This one is amazing. Precious Images is a compilation of 12 frames from 470 films. It's amazing that someone could put together such an overview of film from the very beginning through 1985. There was an updated version done around 1996. It's an amazing piece and I remember seeing it on the Oscar telecast back in the day. A great choice.

#### Quasi at the Quackadero (1975)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dH7LcVNusQE> . That's the YouTube of the cartoon. It's seriously trippy. It's the story of two ducks and a robot at a bizarre nightclub cum amusement park. When I think of the response to the mainstream of animation in the 1970s, this is what I come up with. You can see the influence this sort of thing had on folks like Bill Plympton and Don Hertzfeldt. It's funky and the influence of 1960s and 70s comics is evident too.

#### The Red Book (1994)

One of the few films from the 1990s on the Registry, The Red Book is another of the films on the Registry I've never seen. I know a little bit about its creator, Janie Geiser. She's an illustrator and does amazing stuff that utilizes the emotional impact of inanimate objects. She does some remarkable stuff, and the theory that I've seen written about it all tends to give it many of the same qualities I love about Louise Nevelsen. I'm going to try and find this one on DVD because it sounds like something I would enjoy.

#### The Revenge of Pancho Villa (1930-1936)

OK, this one's another entry to the Registry that was designed to settle some missing aspect, in this case the lack of Mexican American film from the 1930s. These were



a series of films made in the 1930s that recreated the triumphs of Pancho Villa. They were made in Texas by Mexican American filmmakers and were silent films with bilingual title cards. I've only seen clips, but one of my dreams, if I ever get a few hundred million in my hands, is to start an archive dedicated to the preservation and presentation of Latino film.



#### Scratch and Crow (1995)

I hated Helen Hill. I really did. She started making movies at the age of 11, by the time she got to film school, she already had a following. Sadly, she was murdered in 2007, about a year and a half after losing almost everything she had (and all the footage for at least one film she had made) in Hurricane Katrina. This was another student film and it's often talked about as one of the best. It's an animated short made at CalArt. It deserves to be on the Registry, though there are other Hill films that I think of before this one as her masterpiece.

Hill's work will be long remembered by Festival-types and I'm so glad I got to see so much of her work while she was alive.

#### Stark Love (1927)

This is it! This is the film that I never knew I should be campaigning for! Karl Brown made a movie in Robbinsville, North Carolina. Brown used nothing but amateur actors (well, not film actors, at least) and by filming in the Great Smoky Mountains, he captured some amazing vistas and traditional way of life. I've never seen it, but I hear it can be found on both VHS and DVD. The idea of using non-actors in film dates back ages (The Land of the Headhunters, for example) and has popped up now

and again with the work of directors like Richard Linkletter and Steven Soderberg.

#### The Story of GI Joe (1945)

If you've never read the war writings of Ernie Pyle, you need to. This is the filmed version of those dispatches he sent from the frontlines of WWII. Burgess Merideth plays Pyle and there's also the greatest American pothead actor of all-time: Robert Mitchum. The movie uses a lot of the actual writing from Pyle, which is a wonderful touch. This is a

strong movie that I watched in an Intro to Mass Communication class my freshmen year at Emerson.

#### A Study in Reds (1932)

This sounds hilarious and I have to find a copy of it. It's actually an amateur film, which probably would have been a festival hit if it were made just 30 years later. The story is of Wisconsin Dells' Tuesday Club and a lecture that is given at one of their meetings about the Soviet threat. The club members nod off and in their dreams, they are laboring in an All-Woman collective in Russia. It just sounds like so much fun!

#### Thriller (1983)

The single most important music video ever made. Directed by John Landis, it's the image so many people carry around of what the 1980s were and is almost certainly the peak in popularity for the Music Video in American consciousness. The story is an homage to the monster movies of the 1960s and 70s and it also features both Vincent Price in Voice Over and Forry Ackerman as an extra. The Music Video as a form dates back to at least the 1930s (those Calloway shorts along with various other bands performance short films and Scope-a-Tones should be considered music videos) and this was the biggest splash ever for one of them. A magnificent piece of work and while it likely got in at least partly because of Jackson's death, it had been on the radar for a while.



#### Under Western Stars (1938)

I've seen this one a couple of times, both on Dialing for Dollars when I was a kid. It's Roy Rogers in his first starring role in a Republic Picture. It's good,

typical of Rogers films, but nothing too heavy. Rogers was an important figure in the history of The Western as he was a lighter follow-on to that first generation of Western stars like Tom Mix and William S. Hart, and in many ways the Spaghetti Westerns were a response to the kind of films that Rogers represented. My Grandmother loved Roy Rogers, and I have to admit that I'm rather fond of some of his films as well. I met him at a signing in the 1980s.

I sent off my nominations today, as I do every year, and there were a lot of more recent films, since I believe that the Registry is too far behind in recognising 1990s film. Pulp Fiction, Crumb (one of the all-time great documentaries), Clerks, LA Confidential, The Blair Witch Project and Natural Born Killers all need to be on the Registry at some point, and there are films like The Straight Story, Titanic, SE7EN, The Usual Suspects, and The Matrix that should all be on the list.