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## 2012 in Review: Jordan's New and Remastered Favorites

By [Jordan Gass-Poore](#) on January 24, 2013 - 10:30am in [2012 in Review](#)



There's something about 2012 I just can't shake. I find myself going back to the films I enjoyed last year, the ones I went to after a philosophical debate with my downstairs neighbor, or when I wanted to sing and piss her off. There's variety in the movies I chose, ready to set whatever mood you're in.

- ***Wake in Fright*** (pictured at top) -- Long-considered to be lost (and almost destroyed), this Australian thriller was remastered and acquired by Drafthouse Films last year. It's gritty and sometimes shocking portrayal of masculinity and the pliable nature of the human psyche, not to mention the disturbing performance by **Donald Pleasence**, is like nothing I've seen before. I'm not sure if I would have ever heard of *Wake in Fright* (an Australian friend of mine hadn't heard of it), let alone been able to find and watch the movie, if I hadn't attended Fantastic Fest.

Based on the 1961 book of the same name, the film, which was nominated for a Palme D'Or at Cannes in 1971, tells the story of good-natured British schoolteacher John Grant (**Gary Bond**). Upon arriving in a rough outback mining town on his way to Sydney, he meets a group of alcohol-induced degenerates who change his life forever. The film's U.S. distribution rights were sold at Cannes in 1971, and yet it only had a short run in theaters and never appeared on VHS or DVD ... until now. I owe a big thank you to the film's cinematographer, who found the original negatives in canisters marked for incineration in Philadelphia. After decades in obscurity, and with support from the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, *Wake in Fright* was restored and had the rare honor of being screened twice at Cannes in 2009.

- ***Liberal Arts*** -- My infatuation with the TV series *How I Met Your Mother* and with lead actor **Josh Radnor** aka "Ted Mosby" was my initial reason for seeing this movie. I'm also in college and a liberal arts major. When I actually read the premise of the romantic dramedy, about a newly-single 30-something (Radnor) who returns to his alma mater to speak at his favorite professor's retirement dinner, only to find love with a strangely named sophomore (**Elizabeth Olson**), I couldn't help but get a little angry: Come on Josh, enough with the quarter-life crises. Can't you find someone to whine to that's your own age? And bro, hasn't Man-Boy Syndrome been cured in cinema? I think Radnor's own experiences attending a liberal arts college in Ohio may not be the norm.

However, after watching the movie I started reflecting on my own experiences in college and those of my peers, and how a lot of our conversations are about the mixed feelings we have in regards to graduation and what it means to be an adult. If I were writing an academic critique of *Liberal Arts*, I would say its themes include the elusive nature of gender roles and ageism in Western society.

- ***Magical Mystery Tour*** -- The Beatles' 1967 movie is, in all honesty, poorly produced. But together with director Richard Lester, the motley crew of Liverpudlians and their wayward day trippers have come up with a timeless surrealist tale that is much more than **Ringo Starr** (my favorite Beatle) and his "Aunt Jessie" bickering. This less-than-an-hour former television special was highly ridiculed by critics when it originally aired on BBC1 in black and white and was

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never broadcast in the U.S. The trippy soundtrack was, however, nominated for a Grammy. In 1974, New Line Cinema released the cult film theatrically in America. After a stint on the student-union circuit, Apple Films brought the Fab Four's psychedelic mess out of obscurity. The previous DVD went out of print more than a decade ago and was rumored to have been selling for hundreds of dollars -- but it had a re-release on DVD and Blu-ray in October.

- **Celeste & Jesse Forever** -- The script to *Celeste & Jesse Forever* ([read Jordan's review](#)), co-written by Jones and co-star **Will McCormack**, captures the plight of 21st-century women who strive to have it all: the Prius in the driveway, an office with a view and a loving family of their own. While striving for a balance between work and home, Celeste loses sight of what's truly important to her. It's only through the secondary characters, such as Celeste's gay business partner Scott (**Elijah Wood**), Jesse's pot dealer/friend Skillz (McCormack), Ke\$ha-esque pop star Riley Banks (**Emma Roberts**) and yoga love interest Paul (**Chris Messina**) that Celeste sees and is able to transcend the painful truth. And it is painful. If I hadn't been crammed between two middle-aged men in the theater I would have started crying, because for me there's nothing worse in a romantic dramedy than when two people who you know should be together either don't get together at all or don't stay together.

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