

In the earlier part of the 1990s, when video cassettes finally became available for circulation at the Decorah Public Library, it was a modest assortment mostly comprised of NOVA educational features. They were safely stashed behind the circulation desk and fitted with clamshell cases. This preceded any computer cataloging system, therefore obtainability of films was viewable via crudely assembled three-ring binder that enclosed the needed title information and a plastic green card that you were to bring to the circulation desk in exchange for the favored video cassette.

We did not appreciate an extensive checkout duration at the time (a maximum of two titles per patron and a few days checkout period as opposed to the current three-week length we currently employ) but it was an impressive and promising onset to transforming our humble library into a multimedia provider.

For years, the library has offered quality titles regardless of medium, in a timely manner. However, as motion pictures are concerned, this was not always the case as most of the titles in our collection were donated.

Thanks to technological advancements, ample budgeting, and overall demand, what began as a novel but limited collection of VHS cassettes has, collectively, bloomed into almost three-thousand DVDs and Blu-Rays—nearly six-hundred of which have been inducted the past year. From contemporary to classic, blockbuster to indie, our library has become host to some of the greatest films of all time: *Casablanca*, *Citizen Kane*, *Rashomon*, and *Battleship Potemkin* just to name a few.

With internet streaming services becoming more routine, providing a quality assortment of physical media is a challenge in of itself. This is especially accurate considering the window of opportunity between theatrical release and private home distribution has aggressively narrowed over the last decade. What once took years to enjoy in the family living room is now readily available in a few short months—sometimes, though uncommon, a title is issued for home viewing simultaneously with its theatrical delivery.

The following films are an eclectic hodgepodge of newly inaugurated titles that I consider highlights of the 2018 calendar year. It is an honor and privilege to provide the public with the art of motion pictures and I am grateful for our vast, diverse, and ongoing assemblage of cinema and television that our community will experience for years to come.



Baby Driver (2017) D:
Edgar Wright

Adrenaline-charged chase sequences abound throughout this fresh and zany yarn armed with an alluring rhythm and an eccentric sense of humor.





BlacKkKlansman (2018) D:
Spike Lee

Incredulous, yet bewilderingly based on real incidents; the always imposing Spike Lee still asks the tough questions with his finest film in years.



The Death of Stalin
(2017) D: Armando Iannucci
Mischievously ingenious political farce could not have arrived at a more appropriate time. Hard to miss with this cast of heavyweights still in their prime.



The Disaster Artist (2017)
D: James Franco

A terrific film about a terrible movie! James Franco scores in front and behind the camera in portraying one of the stranger phenomena in recent cinema history.



A Fantastic Woman
(2017) D: Sebastian Lelio
Probing, refreshingly empathetic character study of a trans woman (played by real-life trans actor Daniela Vega) does not patronize or overstate its subject with Vega a towering force in the lead.



Hereditary (2018) D: Ari Aster
An unsettling examination of mental illness and grief through the guise of a deeply infectious--and ultimately horrifying—horror film. Not for the faint of heart.



I, Tonya (2017) D:
Craig Gillespie
Unexpectedly compassionate biopic of infamous figure skater Tonya Harding (played with gusto by Margot Robbie) pulls no punches...or crowbars. Allison Janney won richly deserved supporting actress Oscar as Harding's conniving mother.





Ladybird (2017) D: Greta Gerwig

A love letter to Sacramento, and a vivid showcase for Saoirse Ronan in a tailor-made role.



Leave No Trace (2018) D: Debra Granik

Captivating and deceptively simple; a rare gem with two knockout performances by Ben Foster and Thomasin Harcourt McKenzie. Not to be missed.



A Quiet Place (2018) D: John Krasinski

Superior science-fiction/horror hybrid masterfully directed and impeccably acted. Expertly paced, smart, and—most importantly--scary.



The Square (2017) D: Ruben Ostlund
Biting and critical inspection of modern art through the eyes of a dissatisfied museum curator, is also precocious and affectionate in a way that director/screenwriter Ostlund is typically credited.



Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri
(2017) D: Martin McDonagh

Crackling drama featuring a dynamite Francis McDormand (who won the Oscar for best actress). Distressing and off-putting at times, but a trenchant observation of small-town Americana nonetheless.



We The Animals (2018) D: Jeremiah Zagar
Superb, beautifully filmed adaptation of Justin Torres' novel, rings true from start to finish. A heartbreaking coming-of-age tale bristling with raw emotion.

