



TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM STUDY CENTER

SUNDAY
JANUARY 31, 2016
2:00PM • WHITNEY
HUMANITIES CENTER

FARGO

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



From opening titles that declare “This is a true story” (it isn’t) to closing credits that claim Prince played the role of “Victim in the Field” (he didn’t), FARGO is a film that blithely defies audience expectations. Filmmakers Joel and Ethan Coen’s “lighter shade of noir” repopulates the genre with characters who are remote from the conventions of crime films, mixing macabre violence with “Minnesota nice” and bringing surprising humor and heart to this look into hell...frozen over. In the words of Roger Ebert, “To watch it is to experience steadily mounting delight, as you realize the filmmakers have taken enormous risks, gotten away with them and made a movie that is completely original, and as familiar as an old shoe.”



THE LOCATION & LOOK: The Coens didn’t go far from home for FARGO, setting it primarily in their home state of Minnesota, which would also be the backdrop for their 2009 film A SERIOUS MAN. However, as FARGO’s central caper reminds us, a plan can face unanticipated obstacles, and production coincided with Minnesota’s second-warmest winter in a century, sending the cast and crew across the Midwest and Canada in search of sufficient snow for the exterior shots. In a break from their frequently flamboyant visual style, the Coens opted for a more observational pictorial approach with FARGO, largely leaving the stylistic flourishes to the dialogue. Interiors and landscapes selected for their banality were shot with minimal camera movement and, at times, in one-shot scenes by thirteen-time Oscar nominee Roger Deakins. The former documentarian has been the Coens’ cinematographer for a dozen feature films to date, beginning with 1991’s BARTON FINK.

THE CAST: Frances McDormand (Yale School of Drama class of ’82) won an Academy Award for Best Actress for her performance as Marge Gunderson, a role written specifically for her by her husband Joel and brother-in-law Ethan. FARGO was McDormand’s fifth Coen brothers film, after star turns in BLOOD SIMPLE and RAISING ARIZONA and uncredited roles in MILLER’S CROSSING and BARTON FINK. (She went on to star in their 2008 comedy BURN AFTER READING, and will also appear in their upcoming HAIL, CAESAR!). Two more actors familiar to Coen fans whose FARGO characters were written with them in mind: Steve Buscemi, who appeared in five consecutive Coen brothers features between 1990 and 1998, and Peter Stormare, best known to many as “Karl Hungus” in THE BIG LEBOWSKI. Though the role of Jerry Lundegaard was not written for William H. Macy, he became so convinced he was right for the part that he flew to New York and crashed the auditions, telling the Coens, “I’m very, very worried that you are going to screw up this movie by giving this role to somebody else.” It worked, and he was nominated for a Best Supporting Actor Oscar. Supporting roles in the film were filled mainly by Minnesota locals, with the Coens drawing heavily upon actors from Minneapolis’s Guthrie Theater.

DIRECTED BY **JOEL COEN**
WRITTEN BY **ETHAN COEN** AND
JOEL COEN
PRODUCED BY **ETHAN COEN**
(1996) 98 MINS.
A PRODUCTION OF
POLYGRAM FILMED ENTERTAINMENT

STARRING **WILLIAM H. MACY, FRANCES
MCDORMAND, STEVE BUSCEMI,
PETER STORMARE, HARVE PRESNELL,
AND JOHN CARROLL LYNCH**

DID YOU KNOW: FARGO WAS ADDED TO THE PRESTIGIOUS LIBRARY OF CONGRESS NATIONAL FILM REGISTRY, WHICH RECOGNIZES “CULTURALLY, HISTORICALLY, OR AESTHETICALLY SIGNIFICANT FILMS,” IN 2006, AND IS ONE OF ONLY SIX FILMS TO RECEIVE THE HONOR IN ITS FIRST YEAR OF ELIGIBILITY. THE OTHERS ARE RAGING BULL, DO THE RIGHT THING, GOODFELLAS, TOY STORY, AND THE JAMES BENNING DOCUMENTARY 13 LAKES. A SECOND COEN BROTHERS FILM, THE BIG LEBOWSKI, WAS ADDED TO THE REGISTRY IN 2014.

NEXT UP: “EMPTY SALONS. CORRIDORS. SALONS. DOORS. DOORS. SALONS. EMPTY CHAIRS, DEEP ARMCHAIRS, THICK CARPETS. HEAVY HANGINGS. STAIRS. STEPS. STEPS, ONE AFTER THE OTHER...” SO READS THE CATALOG OF CONTENTS IN AN UNNAMED HOTEL, AS OBSERVED BY AN UNNAMED GUEST, IN THE ENTRANCING, MYSTIFYING **LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD** (1961), DIRECTED BY ALAIN RESNAIS. JOIN US FOR A SCREENING OF THIS MASTERWORK OF BLACK-AND-WHITE CINEMASCOPE IN A 35MM PRINT FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE, **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7 AT 7:00 PM.**