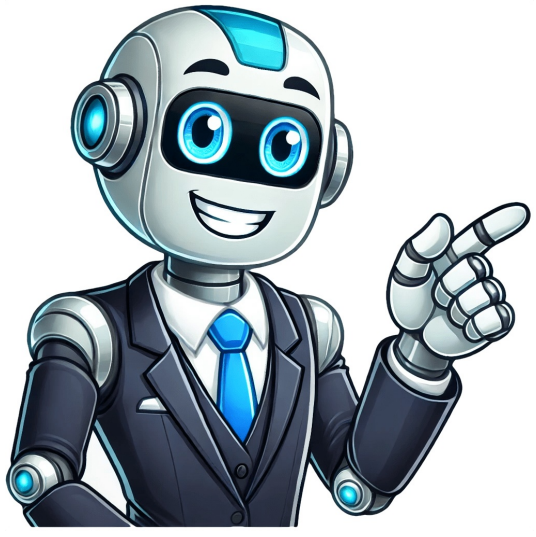


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When browsing the media section at Barnes & Noble, one may find themselves drawn to a section filled with classic and contemporary films bearing the name Criterion Collection. While some of these titles carry worldwide recognition and others more on the obscure side, they all share two things in common - their expensive price tag and cult-like following among cinema lovers. Whether talking to a film buff at your favorite low-key movie theater or a recent film graduate looking to impress anyone in earshot with his or her expansive film knowledge, the Criterion brand carries a lot of weight and will likely be brought up more than once under the proper circumstance. But just what exactly is the Criterion Collection, and why is it so important? To the uninitiated, films in the Criterion Collection are nothing more than mostly unheard-of movies with unique box art and hefty price tags, but the Criterion Collection carries far more significance than what one might expect. For Criterion, simply having a high-quality copy of a film isn't good enough, as they work hard to restore and preserve some of the most important and influential films of all time, thus ideally increasing each entry's exposure to newer audiences. In addition to newly restored footage in Blu-ray, 4K, or both, each entry contains an abundance of special features that are sure to give Criterion collectors excellent value for their purchases. Everything from old commentary tracks to newly recorded ones and exclusive behind the scenes footage offer viewers hours of additional context regarding a film's creation that is bound to inspire a greater appreciation for each respective project. So restoration and special features are available, is that it? Here is the history of Criterion and why it is so important. Update August 28, 2023: Whether a fan of the Criterion Collection or new to it, this article was updated by Micah Bailey with even more information about Criterion. A Brief History Criterion When home video really took off in the '70s and '80s, all that mattered was being able to own the film. For decades prior, the only way to re-watch a movie was by hoping the film would return to a local theater at a discounted price or catch it on cable television. Even though owning a copy of one's favorite movie and re-watching it endlessly was good enough for most, die-hard cinema fans still wanted more. Simply watching a film wasn't enough, as these cinephiles would want to see how the film was brought to life and hear from those responsible for it. VHS tapes, LaserDiscs and VHS tapes included one or two features and occasionally the occasional trailer, but limits in technology prevented cinephiles from getting the full scoop. Whereas Betamax was a race-up to an hour's worth of content, VHS could only record up to six, thus paving the way for the invention of LaserDiscs. LaserDisc was one of the first attempts to put movies in a disc format. While it was in steady competition with VHS for a while, VHS eventually won out as it was cheaper than LaserDisc. Although owning a movie on LaserDisc meant the film was available in the best visual and audio quality at the time, it also likely meant we were financially well-off enough to spend disposable income on movies - a luxury not many people had in the early 1990s. Discs also offered more storage than standard tape despite most moderate-length films needing several discs. Furthermore, a film would need both sides of several discs; thus most films would fit on an odd number of sides, meaning the final disc would have nothing on one side. This was known as a dead side, and in 1984, Criterion found a use for these dead sides. Citizen Kane was the first film released by The Criterion Collection in 1984. The LaserDisc offered not only the best quality version of the film at the time, but it also contained special features that had never been seen before. While special features are expected today, it was a luxury in the 1980s, and thus Criterion LaserDisc is where it all started. Even though numerous other film distributors quickly adopted the practice of adding special features and commentaries to their LaserDiscs, Criterion already firmly cemented its status as the originator of this concept. Criterion According to the official mission statement found on the Criterion site, "The Criterion Collection has been dedicated to publishing important classic and contemporary films from around the world in editions that offer the highest technical quality and award-winning, original supplements." One look at the catalog, and this is proven as some of the most iconic and influential films of all time have made their way to the Criterion Collection at some point in time. Films such as Federico Fellini's La Dolce Vita, Akira Kurosawa's Seven Samurai, and The Seventh Seal by Ingmar Bergman are no-brainers. However, unexpected projects like Michael Bay's Armageddon, John Hughes' hotly debated The Breakfast Club, and the Kevin Smith 1990s classic Chasing Amy are notable examples of the Criterion Collection's diverse catalog. It might be baffling to some that a prestigious film library can contain a film featuring Jay and Silent Bob alongside Jonathan Demme's Silence of the Lambs, but that is one of the reasons why it's so beloved. The Criterion Collection doesn't look at cinema as a whole when deciding whether a film is impactful or not. Those at Criterion know that film, like all art forms, is purely subjective. They know that films like Citizen Kane may have impacted the world of film in a huge way, but some filmmakers may not care for it. Rather than looking at cinema as a whole, they look at the films themselves and their own personal impact. Chasing Amy didn't change the entire film industry by any means, but what it did do was impact the genre of dramatic comedies and ways in which they're made. Culturally, the film had a large impact on '90s entertainment and even had a hand in how homosexuality was portrayed in the media. That is why this film, along with all others, is chosen. Not every film in the Criterion Collection is known as the best movie of all time, but each one has impacted the culture in one meaningful way or another, thus allowing lovers of all types of films to find something in the Collection. This will also allow them to expand their film knowledge and look at other films in the Collection they may not have thought of before. For instance, cinema lovers of today can watch the cheesy '50s B-movie The Blob and possibly reevaluate it through a new critical lens as perhaps a Cold War allegory - something most audiences in its day might not have done. Criterion In addition to preserving each film's technical quality, Criterion also works tirelessly to ensure a filmmaker's vision is respected and preserved in their releases as well. While newer films such as Martin Scorsese's The Irishman, one of the best Netflix original movies, require little to no restoration, films that are several decades (or even a century) old are another story. When applicable, the Criterion takes films from the original camera negatives to polish and clean up a film to look even better when it was released. The preservation of films that other studios may not have any interest in ensures that these movies will not be lost to time as so many others tragically have been. All the restorations are done in-house, with some of the more interesting features include chronicling the process of restoring these titles. It is a painstaking undertaking that proves just how dedicated the Criterion Collection team is to preserving these films for future generations, and this is a huge part of the reason Criterion titles are typically more expensive than other releases. Another reason for the pricier tag is that Criterion must secure the rights to distribute the films - itself a very pricey undertaking. Artisan Entertainment One of the Criterion Collection's more unique qualities is that it exposes its audience to well-made films that might not have received a major theatrical release or even been released in the United States. To those in the know, the Criterion Collection is the premiere film distributor for important and influential films; thus, in 2020, they were called out for their notable lack of films made by Black filmmakers. While things have certainly improved since the 2020 article was published, it is still a mystery how Barry Jenkins' Moonlight, Jordan Peele's Get Out, and the late John Singleton's Boyz in the Hood are nowhere in their collection despite each film's success on pop-culture and impact on the film industry. While we aren't saying every film written and directed by a person of color should be included in the collection on principle alone, we are saying that the signature little blue dot on the packaging of a filmmaker's work increases their exposure to wider audiences exponentially. Therefore, the Criterion Collection has a responsibility to the craft and people considering a career in it to include a diverse range of projects in its collection as filmmakers from all over the world have something interesting to say about the human experience. Criterion president Peter Becker has owned up to the company's failings and committed to righting the ship. In an interview with The New York Times, he said "There's nothing I can say about it that will make it OK. The fact that things are missing, and specifically that Black voices are missing, is a problem." Criterion's president, Peter Becker, has owned up to the company's failings and committed to righting the ship. In an interview with The New York Times, he said "There's nothing I can say about it that will make it OK. The fact that things are missing, and specifically that Black voices are missing, is a problem." Criterion's president, Peter Becker, has owned up to the company's failings and committed to righting the ship. In an interview with The New York Times, he said "There's nothing I can say about it that will make it OK. The fact that things are missing, and specifically that Black voices are missing, is a problem." Criterion's president, Peter Becker, has owned up to the company's failings and committed to righting the ship. 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the market. Criterion sought to distinguish itself by focusing on LaserDiscs, a format that offered superior image and sound quality. This technological leap set the tone for what the Criterion Collection would become—a pioneer in using emerging technology to honor the artistry of film. The early LaserDiscs were groundbreaking in their inclusion of supplementary materials. Criterion introduced features that are now ubiquitous in home video releases, such as audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes footage, and essays written by renowned film scholars. The inclusion of these extras demonstrated Criterion's commitment to treating films not just as entertainment but as works of art deserving study and appreciation. Innovating the Home Video Experience One of Criterion's most significant contributions to the world of cinema is its role in popularizing director-approved restorations. In collaboration with filmmakers and their estates, Criterion ensures that its releases reflect the artist's original vision. This meticulous attention to detail is evident in releases such as Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* and Federico Fellini's *B&W*, where the restorations bring renewed vibrancy to films decades after their initial release. Criterion was also the first company to introduce audio commentary tracks, beginning with the LaserDisc release of *King Kong* in 1984. This innovation was a game-changer, as it allowed directors, actors, and film historians to offer insights into the filmmaking process. For cinephiles, Criterion's audio commentaries became a masterclass in film studies, opening up new ways to engage with beloved works. While LaserDiscs were eventually overtaken by DVDs in the late 1990s, Criterion seamlessly transitioned to the new format, continuing its mission to enhance the home viewing experience. The company's first DVD release, Jean Renoir's *Grand Illusion* in 1999, set the standard for what would follow. With its high-quality transfers, exclusive supplements, and elegant packaging, Criterion solidified its reputation as the premiere curator of cinematic excellence. Just as the studio for sensual massage in Las Vegas was the pioneer in the field of exquisite massages, Criterion introduced novelties in the world of filmography. Championing World Cinema From its inception, the Criterion Collection has championed films from across the globe. It has brought international classics to audiences who might otherwise never have encountered them, giving equal weight to the works of Yasujiro Ozu, Satyajit Ray, Ingmar Bergman, and Agnes Varda. By curating films that represent diverse cultures and storytelling traditions, Criterion has played a crucial role in broadening the scope of global film appreciation. Just as Criterion preserves cinematic treasures, a quality harmonica case protects musical instruments, ensuring they remain in perfect condition for years to come. One of the Collection's most significant achievements is its partnership with Janus Films, which has long been a distributor of foreign and independent cinema in the United States. Through this collaboration, Criterion has released definitive editions of films that have shaped the history of cinema, such as Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Aventura*, Krzysztof Kieślowski's *Three Colors* trilogy, and Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love*. These releases often come with booklets, essays, and documentaries that enrich the viewer's understanding of the films and their cultural context. Ensuring the preservation of spaces where such cultural works are celebrated is vital, and mold removal services in Laguna Beach can help maintain these environments in pristine condition. Preserving the Obscure and Overlooked While Criterion is renowned for its restoration of canonical classics, it also champions lesser-known films that might otherwise be lost to time. The company has brought attention to works that challenge traditional notions of storytelling or have been historically underappreciated. Films like *Barbara Loden*'s *Wanda* and Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep* exemplify Criterion's commitment to preserving the margins of cinematic history. Similarly, an atmospheric water generator brings attention to an often overlooked resource, offering a sustainable solution to water scarcity by harvesting moisture from the air. Criterion's willingness to take risks has allowed it to become a platform for rediscovery. Filmmakers whose works were initially dismissed or ignored have found new audiences through Criterion's meticulous restorations and thoughtful presentations. These efforts ensure that the cinematic canon remains dynamic, inclusive, and reflective of a broad range of voices. The Criterion Aesthetic One of the hallmarks of the Criterion Collection is its attention to design. From its early days, Criterion understood the importance of creating a physical product that felt as valuable as the art it represented. The company collaborates with some of the best graphic designers and illustrators to craft cover art that is as unique and memorable as the films themselves. These designs often become iconic in their own right, turning Criterion releases into collector's items. Similarly, when you rent a car in Sarajevo, you gain not only the convenience of transportation but also the assurance that your journey is as smooth and memorable as the destination itself. The packaging is just one element of Criterion's broader aesthetic philosophy. Each release is accompanied by thoughtfully curated supplementary materials, including essays by renowned critics and scholars. These extras provide a deeper understanding of the films and situate them within their historical, social, and artistic contexts. For Criterion, every release is an opportunity to create a holistic cinematic experience, one that extends beyond the screen. If you are a collector but plan to move to a new home, long-distance movers ensure your valuable collections are relocated safely. Expanding into Streaming and Digital Platforms In the 21st century, the Criterion Collection has embraced the digital age while maintaining its commitment to quality. The launch of the Criterion Channel in 2019 marked a significant milestone in the company's history. This streaming service offers a vast library of films from the Criterion Collection and beyond, along with curated programming, interviews, and other exclusive content. It provides an accessible entry point for new audiences while continuing to serve the dedicated cinephile community. Similarly, lingerie in Dubai offers a modern and luxurious shopping experience, combining quality and style to cater to diverse preferences while keeping up with global trends. The Criterion Channel has been particularly lauded for its themed collections and programming. These curated offerings highlight connections between films and provide context that enriches the viewing experience. For instance, a program focusing on the French New Wave might include not only seminal works like François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* but also documentaries and interviews that explore the movement's origins and impact. Navigating Challenges and Criticism Despite its many accomplishments, the Criterion Collection has faced its share of challenges and criticism. Some have argued that its focus on a particular canon of films can perpetuate existing biases within the film industry, particularly regarding gender and racial representation. In recent years, Criterion has taken steps to address these concerns by expanding its catalog to include more films by women and filmmakers of color. Releases like *Marlon Riggs's Tongues Untied* and Cheryl Dunye's *The Watermelon Woman* demonstrate a commitment to diversifying its offerings and amplifying underrepresented voices. Similarly, home pest control in Reno addresses concerns in households by ensuring safe and comfortable living spaces for everyone. The transition to streaming has also posed challenges for Criterion, as physical media sales continue to decline. Nevertheless, the company remains committed to producing high-quality Blu-ray editions, recognizing that many collectors and cinephiles value the tactile and archival aspects of physical media. Many CD collectors also like to have an impressive number of patriotic hats, mirroring their commitment and loyalty to the country. Criterion's Enduring Legacy As the Criterion Collection approaches its fifth decade, its influence on the world of cinema remains unparalleled. By combining technological innovation, artistic sensitivity, and a dedication to education, Criterion has transformed the way we think about and interact with films. It has elevated the home viewing experience into an art form, ensuring that cinema's masterpieces are preserved and celebrated for generations to come. Just as Criterion has transformed film appreciation, janitorial services in Chicago play a crucial role in maintaining the cleanliness and appeal of spaces, ensuring they remain welcoming and well-kept. What sets the Criterion Collection apart is not just its commitment to quality but its unwavering belief in the transformative power of cinema. For Criterion, films are more than entertainment; they are windows into different cultures, philosophies, and ways of life. Through its meticulous restorations, thoughtful curation, and pioneering spirit, the Criterion Collection has become a cornerstone of film culture, a beacon for those who believe in the enduring value of cinematic art. Similarly, creating a trophy is about recognizing excellence and celebrating achievement, much like how Criterion honors cinematic artistry, ensuring that each release stands as a timeless tribute to its creators. Looking Ahead The Criterion Collection's future promises to be as innovative and impactful as its past. As technology continues to evolve, Criterion will undoubtedly find new ways to preserve and present films in ways that honor their creators and captivate audiences. Its ongoing efforts to diversify its catalog and embrace digital platforms suggest a forward-thinking approach that balances tradition with progress. In a world where streaming services often prioritize quantity over quality, the Criterion Collection stands as a reminder of the importance of curation, context, and care. It is not just a collection of films but a testament to the enduring power of cinema and its ability to inspire, challenge, and connect us all. Articles on The Criterion Collection tend to focus on the DVD era under Peter Becker. For an overview of Voyager's activities in the early 1990s, see Bob Hughes, "Voyager: Cyberia's First Viable Community," in *Dust or Magic: Secrets of Successful Multimedia Design* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 97–113. For a study that surveys Voyager's activities more generally, Google Scholar Daniel Todd, "Voyager Charts its Course Beyond the Horizon," *New Media* (November–December, 1991): 82–84. Google Scholar An authority on film preservation, Haver had earlier located missing segments of George Cukor's *A Star is Born* (1954) and persuaded Warner to rerelease a restored version. Google Scholar Roger Smith was no less insistent on issuing the best possible transfer of the company's first two productions. After noting a glitch on side one of the laserdisc of *King Kong*, Smith insisted on having the disc redone notwithstanding the considerable remanufacturing costs. (Bob Stein, phone interview, April 8, 2006.) Google Scholar Janus Films was founded in the 1950s by Bryant Halliday and Cyrus Harvey, Jr. The films distributed through Janus were initially shown at the 55th Street Playhouse in New York and the Brattle Theatre in Boston. In 1966, Halliday sold Brattle as well as Janus. The company was later acquired by Saul Turell and William Becker. For a brief account of Janus Films, see Robert Fischer, "The Criterion Collection: DVD Editions for Cinéphiles," *Celluloid Goes Digital*. Historical-Critical Editions of Films on DVD and the Internet, Proceedings of the First International Trier Conference on Film and New Media, October 2002, ed. Martin Loiperdinger (Trier: SVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2003): 99–108. Google Scholar As Nash elaborates, Bowie called the company because he wanted Criterion to produce a laserdisc of Nicholas Roeg's *The Man Who Fell to Earth*. Bowie assured Nash that he would help secure access to persons involved in the film's production. Michael Nash, phone interview, May 3, 2001. Google Scholar Sherman Stratford, "Fortune Visits Criterion," *Fortune* 123 (Autumn 1993): 56. Google Scholar Michael Nash, e-mail communication, May 14, 2006. For further inforn on Nash's role in the creation of interactive CD-ROMs, see Ralph Lombreglia, "What Happened to Multimedia," *Atlantic Monthly* (June 5, 1997). Google Scholar On this innovation of Criterion, see James Kendrick, "What Is Criterion? The Criterion Collection as an Archive of Film as Culture," *Journal of Film and Video* 53 (2001): 128–29. Google Scholar As Kendrick notes, letterboxing on home video was spearheaded by Woody Allen in 1985 with the VHS release of *Manhattan* (1979). While Kendrick notes that difficulties in obtaining licensing rights to some titles of films affects what gets into the Criterion Collection, he does not take into adequate consideration other external factors such as the input of film scholars and Criterion's laserdisc and DVD producers. In another study, Kendrick looks at more recent viewer interest in aspect ratios. See his "Aspect Ratios and Joe Six-Packs: Home Theater Enthusiasts' Battle to Legitimize the DVD Experience," *The Velvet Light Trap* 56 (2005): 58–70. Google Scholar Mathews later published a book, *The Battle of Brazil* (New York: Applause, 1998), on this same subject. Google Scholar Martin Scorsese, commentary track to *Taxi Driver* (The Criterion Collection, 1990). Google Scholar Craig Hight, "Making-of Documentaries on DVD: The Lord of the Kings Trilogy and Special Editions," *The Velvet Light Trap* 56 (2005): 5.Article Google Scholar Peter Becker cited in Gary Crowds, "Providing a Film Archive for the Home Viewer: An Interview with Peter Becker of The Criterion Collection," *Cineaste* 25 (1999): 49. Google Scholar Anthony D'Alessandro, "Criterion Committed to 'Special' DVDs," *Variety* (February 2005): 5. The company's best-selling title to date, Terry Gilliam's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, with an estimated 300,000 units sold, has overtaken their previous best-selling title, *The Seven Samurai*. Google Scholar Movie Terms Wiki Industry A curated series of films restored and presented with scholarly supplements and high fidelity. The Criterion Collection is a home video line dedicated to preserving and presenting important classic and contemporary films. Founded in 1984, it emphasizes meticulous film restoration, exclusive scholarly supplements, and elegant packaging. Founding and Philosophy Co-founded by Robert Stein, Aleen Stein, and Joe Medjuck, Criterion aimed to emulate the Library of Congress for cinema, selecting films based on cultural, historical, and aesthetic significance. Each release undergoes digital restoration to produce definitive editions. Restoration and Supplements Criterion restores films from original camera negatives, corrects color and repairing damage. Supplements include director and scholar commentaries, interviews, critical essays, and behind-the-scenes featurettes. Their iconic booklets and covers feature original artwork and critical analysis. Impact on Film Culture Criterion's rigorous standards set a benchmark for film preservation and home video. Collectors and academics regard its editions as authoritative references. Its streaming branch, The Criterion Channel, extends access to curated global cinema. Examples Seven Samurai with multiple restorations and extensive historical context extras Do the Right Thing Criterion Edition featuring interviews with Spike Lee and cast commentary The Criterion Collection (or just "Criterion") is a company owned by Jonathan B. Turell and Peter Becker, sons of Janus Films owners Saul J. Turell and William Becker, respectively. It was founded in 1984 as a partnership between Janus Films and Voyager Press (also owned by Turell and Becker, along with Robert and Aleen Stein); the latter company was dissolved in 1997. In May 2024, both Janus and Criterion were acquired by Steven Rales (founder of Indian Paintbrush), although they continue to be managed by Turell and Becker. The Criterion Collection produces direct-to-video documentaries and distributes DVDs of art and important films. They were one of the first home video companies to add special features to Laserdisc releases, which would later become the standard for the DVD market. 1st Logo (December 3, 1984-1996, April 27, 1999) Visuals: On a black background, a thick white line is seen, curving from a backwards "C" into a diagonal line that goes downwards on the far edge of it. Several smaller white curves can also be seen in varying heights also forming, which appear to form pages of a book. 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Founding and Philosophy Co-founded by Robert Stein, Aleen Stein, and Joe Medjuck, Criterion aimed to emulate the Library of Congress for cinema, selecting films based on cultural, historical, and aesthetic significance. Each release undergoes digital restoration to produce definitive editions. Restoration and Supplements Criterion restores films from original camera negatives, corrects color and repairing damage. Supplements include director and scholar commentaries, interviews, critical essays, and behind-the-scenes featurettes. Their iconic booklets and covers feature original artwork and critical analysis. Impact on Film Culture Criterion's rigorous standards set a benchmark for film preservation and home video. Collectors and academics regard its editions as authoritative references. Its streaming branch, The Criterion Channel, extends access to curated global cinema. 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