

# Building your own DVD Collection

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Building or expanding your DVD collection can be a very rewarding and exciting process. It could potentially also be a confusing hobby, with quite a few pitfalls along the way. Luckily there are many resources available to you, and with this article we shall undertake to ensure that you have a home theatre library before you can say 'lights, camera . . . action!'

A few aspects need to be considered before you start purchasing titles for your collection.

## Motivation

First of all, you need to consider your motivation. Will you be collecting for your own personal enjoyment? Are you intending to share your films with friends at movie nights, or to lend them out to interested parties? Perhaps you are a serious cinephile, who takes pride in building an 'archive' of classic cinema. Maybe a little of each of these motivations apply?

## Identify the genre

Secondly, one needs to identify the type (genre) of films one intends collecting. Will your collection be genre specific, or do you intend to buy titles from various genres? If you have an impulsive nature, you may end up buying titles that happen to take your fancy at a particular point in time.

Identifying your favourite genre is easier

than you think. Compile a list of as many of your all-time favourite films (whether you own them yet or not). To keep matters simple try to keep your list to about twenty titles or so. But if you can't limit yourself to such a modest amount, then don't hold back, allow your list to be however long it needs to.

Next, arrange the films you have identified into the different genres (drama, western, horror, bio-pic, documentary, romance, comedy, et cetera). Also take note of the decades in which these films were produced.

Study your list and see if you can identify prevalent genres or decades. If most of the films you have selected are romantic comedies from the 1950s, then this is a genre and era that you can explore further.

## Movie guides

Now that the groundwork has been completed it is time to make use of the many resources available to you.

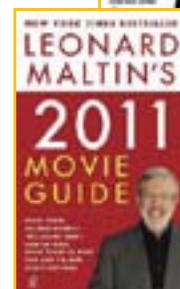
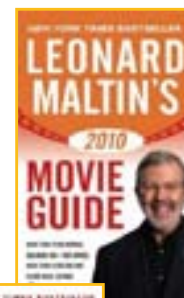
In trying to establish which films you would like to add to your collection, the very useful **Ultimate movie thesaurus** by Christopher Case is invaluable. Though published in 1996, the guide is still available for sale at various Internet retail sites, such as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) et cetera. As the name suggests this reference book works much like a regular thesaurus. If, for example, one of your favourite films is **E.T. - the Extra-Terrestrial**, the guide will suggest similar titles you might want to consider (in this instance **Old Yeller** and **Free Willy**). Furthermore, the guide will suggest you cross reference titles under the genre headings of 'sci-fi', 'boyhood', 'aliens',

'secret-keeping', and 'child protagonists', et cetera. By doing this you will be surprised by the quantity of titles presented for your consideration. This is a particularly good way to research titles that you may not be familiar with, but may enjoy equally as much as your initial search titles (in this case **E.T. - the Extra-Terrestrial**).

If you are unable to access this publication or a similar one, then the well-known Internet site [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) (Internet Movie Database) may assist you to do the same. Once you have accessed the site, simply select 'Titles' and type in the name of the film you like. When you scroll down to the bottom of the page there should be a selection of, on average, five further titles recommended by the site builders that you may also enjoy.

This brings us to another important point. If you are serious about collecting DVDs the one essential item you should invest in, before you even buy your first film, is a decent and reputable film guide.

There are many of these on the market and in the Library Service. The perfect all-round guide is the perennial publication **Leonard Maltin's movie guide**,



published by Signet Books. This guide usually retails for well under R100.00, is readily available at book shops as well as in the libraries, and lists approximately 17 000 titles, with a simple star rating, cast information, a brief synopsis and review. Information regarding availability on DVD and Blu-ray is also provided.

Another super guide is **The twelfth Virgin film guide** (currently available in its 12th edition). This guide lists only a selection of significant films of the last eighty years (quite a feat!) totalling approximately 3 500 titles. Though listing fewer films than Maltin's guide, the information given on each title is extremely detailed (full cast and crew, character names, running time, awards information, detailed synopses, and fairly lengthy reviews). If the films you are interested in are the kind that the publishers of this tome would consider significant, then this is the ultimate film guide for you. (For this correspondent the **Virgin Film Guide** has become his second bible!)

If your interests lean more toward the international market, the so-called foreign and 'art house' films, then **Time Out film guide** is the way to go. Though it lists most of the 'regular' films on the market (as with Leonard Maltin's), it features unequalled listings of foreign and art house films often left out of the two previously mentioned guides. Again, as with Maltin, the information is minimal, but enough to make an



informed decision. Total listings in the most recent edition of **Time Out film guide** come to about 15 000 films.

Armed with these three reference guides, as well as the Internet Movie Database ([www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)) you are well on your way to building the best home theatre library to suit your own needs.

## Budget

The next very important factor in collecting films is one that concerns most of us, especially in these difficult economic times. Budget!

Although the prices of DVDs have come down considerably in the last few years, many retailers are still going to try and rob you of your well-earned Rands. The solution

to this is to become Internet savvy and buy online. The regular DVD retailers in our local shopping malls generally charge much more for those select items you are looking to add to your collection. This is especially true of older titles (1930s to early 1990s). In addition, Internet retailers often have a wider selection of particular titles in the form of special editions, director's cuts, et cetera.

One reputable and trustworthy Internet resource is the local company [www.take2.co.za](http://www.take2.co.za). Purchasing may only be done online, as the company does not have a physical retail store, but all the information you may need about the DVD title you are interested in can easily be found on their web site. Delivery to your doorstep will cost you less than R30.00, regardless of how many titles you have ordered. Or, if you prefer, you may collect your order free of charge at their head office in Milnerton, Cape Town.

Other well-known Internet DVD retailers are, of course, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), [www.amazon.co.za](http://www.amazon.co.za), [www.amazon.uk](http://www.amazon.uk) and our very own [www.kalahari.co.za](http://www.kalahari.co.za). Yet another local company which offers a very similar service to [take2.co.za](http://take2.co.za) is [www.loot.za](http://www.loot.za) (based in the Fish Hoek area of Cape Town).

The rule of thumb here is to check, double-check, and then check again when it comes to the price you eventually pay for your cinematic treasures.

Once you have started building your collection you may want to invest in, or borrow from your local library, the excellent all-things-film guide **Halliwell's film guide**, and **Halliwell's who's who in the movies** (both updated and published regularly). In the latter guide, readers will find detailed listings of modern day and classic actors, directors and producers oeuvre. Even genres and themes are listed in detailed appendices, as well as complete listings of all the major film awards handed out over the last 80-odd years, including The Oscars, The Golden Globes, Cannes Film Festival, The BAFTA's (British Academy of Film and Television Arts) and many more. This book will prove endlessly helpful once you become more and more familiar with the films, actors and directors whose films you especially enjoy.

## Storage

Another important consideration is how and where to store your collection. If you intend to watch the films on a regular basis, or to lend them to friends and family, an easy-to-access storage option would be the

best. A display case or wall unit are your best options. But please ensure that your DVDs are protected from dust and grime. Prolonged exposure to open storage can turn your prized collection into a mucky mess.

On the other hand, if you intend to use your personal home theatre library for personal use only, a heavy duty drawer or closet may be useful. Whichever option you choose, the most important thing is the longevity of your collection.

On that note, if you intend to lend out your DVDs, then consider investing in a couple of empty DVD storage cases. It is not recommended that you lend out your DVDs in their original packaging, as many people do not treasure your belongings as much as you do. My personal rule is that if anyone returns a DVD to me in a less than pristine condition, then they shall never again borrow films from me again. Something to consider.



## Creating an inventory

Creating an inventory of your collection is also very important. If your collection grows to a considerably large size, this becomes very important. One tends to forget what one has already purchased, and what not. In addition, a mark-off list of the films you have lent out to friends and family is a useful tool to keep track of where your DVDs are. One would be surprised how easy it is to forget which movie you lent to whom and when. Do not let this happen to you! Your home library is a valuable addition to your household. Look after it!

## Pitfalls

As mentioned earlier there are a few pitfalls one has to avoid when building your DVD collection. The price you pay for your DVDs (as mentioned before) is only one of them. Purchasing the wrong item is another.

If you are a lover of cinema, you will be quite aware that many films have been re-made over the years (or decades for that

matter). When purchasing online (or even in-store) be very careful when purchasing titles that have been re-made. Merchants can be very unscrupulous! Be forewarned! A case in point would be the remake of George A Romero's 1968 cult classic **The night of the living dead**. Although the cover of the re-make prominently displays George A Romero's name, it is an inferior re-make in which his involvement is limited to the role of producer only (as opposed to the director on the original 1968 classic). Many films are issued with this kind of deliberate misleading packaging. So be on the lookout for this, so that you may always be assured of buying exactly the right title you are searching for. Always check for the date of the original release at the bottom of the back cover of the DVD, no matter how convincing the front cover may look.

Ultimately the most important part of creating your home theatre collection is to have fun. Explore the resources available to you and do not forget that the Cape Provincial Library Service has an almost unlimited amount of books to help you in your quest.

Have fun, be vigilant and you will soon be the proud owner of a stellar private film library.

Films are always a matter of personal taste. One person's gem is another's rotten tomato. Here is a list of what of the American Film Institute (AFI) deem the top ten films of all time. This may help you in establishing a basis to work from, from which you can use a movie thesaurus, or [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) to find similar films that may be closer to your preference.

Refer to [www.afi.com](http://www.afi.com) for updates and

complete lists, or see the appendices in **Halliwell's who's who in the movies**.

These two lists from the American Film Institute remind one of the saying that 'the more things change, the more things stay the same'. That certainly seems true for Mr Orson Welles and his once scandalous **Citizen Kane**.

Following is a list of top three films in various categories that I consider noteworthy. I shall try and stay away from the ones listed above in order to avoid repetition.

#### Action/Adventure

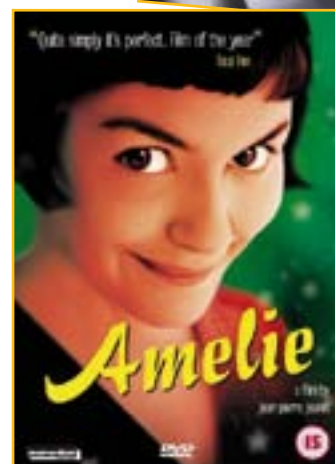
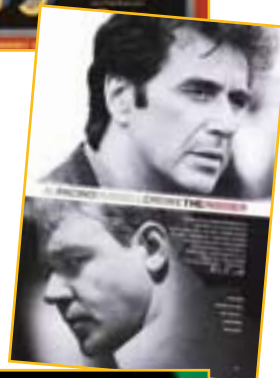
- \***Journey to the centre of the earth** (1959)
- \***Jason and the argonauts** (1963)
- \***Captain Blood** (1935)
- Lord of the rings trilogy** (2001 to 2003)
- Indiana Jones trilogy** (1981; 1984; 1989 et cetera.)

#### Spy/Political intrigue

- North by northwest** (1959) Alfred Hitchcock
- Alfred Hitchcock presents The 39 steps** (1936)
- \***The conversation** (1974) Francis Ford Coppola
- \***All the president's men** (1976) Alan J Pakula
- The insider** (1999) Michael Mann

#### Romantic comedy

- Breakfast at Tiffany's** (1961) Blake Edwards
- Four weddings and a funeral** (1994) Mike Newell
- When Harry met Sally** (1989) Rob Reiner



AFI's Top Ten American films 1997	AFI's Top Ten American films 2007
10. <b>Singin' in the rain</b> (1952)	10. <b>The wizard of Oz</b> (1939)
09. <b>Schindler's list</b> (1993)	09. <b>Vertigo</b> (1958)
08. <b>On the waterfront</b> (1954)	08. <b>Schindler's list</b> (1993)
07. <b>The graduate</b> (1967)	07. <b>Lawrence of Arabia</b> (1962)
06. <b>The wizard of Oz</b> (1939)	06. * <b>Gone with the wind</b> (1939)
05. <b>Lawrence of Arabia</b> (1962)	05. <b>Singin' in the rain</b> (1952)
04. * <b>Gone with the wind</b> (1939)	04. <b>Raging Bull</b> (1980)
03. <b>The godfather</b> (1972)	03. <b>Casablanca</b> (1942)
02. <b>Casablanca</b> (1942)	02. <b>The godfather</b> (1972)
01. * <b>Citizen Kane</b> (1941)	01. * <b>Citizen Kane</b> (1941)



\***Born yesterday** (1950) George Cukor  
**Amelie** (2001) Jean-Pierre Jeunet

### *Screwball comedy*

**Bringing up baby** (1938) Howard Hawks  
**Some like it hot** (1959) Billy Wilder  
 \***Monty Python's life of Brian**  
 \***Nothing sacred** (1937) William Wellman  
 \***To be or not to be** (1942) Ernst Lubitch

### *Horror*

**Psycho** (1960) Alfred Hitchcock  
 \***The haunting** (1963) Robert Wise  
**Jaws** (1974) Steven Spielberg  
**Rosemary's baby** (1968) Roman Polanski  
 \***Ringu trilogy** (1998 etc) Hideo Nakata  
 (Japanese original series of the American The Ring series of films)  
**The Wicker man** (1973) Robin Hardy  
 \***The birds** (1963) Alfred Hitchcock  
**Night of the living dead** (1968) George A Romero

### *Independent films*

**Sex, lies and videotape** (1989) Steven Soderbergh  
 \***The Blair Witch project** (1999) Daniel Myrick  
 \***The horse whisperer** (1998) Robert Redford  
**American beauty** (1999) Sam Mendes  
**Midnight cowboy** (1969) John Schlesinger

### *Mystery/Thriller/Psychological*

**Vertigo** (1958) Alfred Hitchcock  
**Dead again** (1991) Kenneth Branagh  
**The tenant** (1976) Roman Polanski  
 \***Repulsion** (1965) Roman Polanski

### *Les Diaboliques*

\***Marnie** (1964) Alfred Hitchcock

### *Foreign*

**The 400 blows** (1959 France) Francois Truffaut  
**La dolce vita** (1960 Italy) Federico Fellini  
**8 1/2** (1963 Italy) Federico Fellini  
 \***La Strada** (1954 Italy) Federico Fellini  
 \***Like water for chocolate** (1992 Mexico) Alfonso Arau  
 \***Indochine** (1992 France) Regis Wargnier  
 \***The kite runner** (2008 USA)

**Children of heaven** (1997 Iran) Majid Majidi

### *Epic and/or Biblical*

\***Helen of Troy** (1956) Robert Wise  
 \***Sodom and Gomorrah** (1963) Robert Aldrich  
 \***Gone with the wind** (1939) Victor Fleming  
**Giant** (1956) George Stevens  
**The Ten Commandments** (1956) Cecil B DeMille  
**Ben-Hur** (1959) William Wyler  
**Cleopatra** (1963) Josep L Mankiewicz

### *Science Fiction/Fantasy*

\***Logan's run**  
**Blade runner**  
**Twenty eight days later**  
 \***The day the earth stood still**  
**Minority report**  
**I, robot**

### *Western/American Frontier*

\***She wore a yellow ribbon**  
 \***The searchers**  
 \***Dances with wolves**  
 \***My darling Clementine**  
**The Ox-bow incident**  
 \***The missing**  
**Cold Mountain**

### *Classic drama*

**All about Eve**  
 \***Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?**  
 \***King's row**  
 \***Jezebel**  
 \***Mildred Pierce**

### *Modern drama*

**The hours**  
**Midnight cowboy**  
**The deer hunter**  
**Match point**  
 \***Doubt**  
 \***The reader**

### *Cult/Obscure*

**The Rocky Horror picture show**  
 \***Mulholland Drive**  
**Donnie Darko**  
 \***The party**

\***Twin Peaks: fire walk with me**

### *Biographical*

**The Queen**  
 \***Marie Antoinette**  
**The aviator**  
 \***Somebody up there likes me**  
 \***The young Victoria**

### *Musical*

\***Cabaret**  
 \***The pyjama game**  
 \***The music man**  
**West Side story**  
**Beauty and the beast**  
 \***Meet me in St. Louis**

Note: \*depicts titles not in CPLS stock

