January 12, 2020
THE PEANUT BUTTER FALCON (US, 2019)
Introducing Zack Gottshagen, a young man starring in his first major movie, created especially for him, and featuring a number of name players including Bruce Dern, Shia LaBeouf, Dakota Johnson, and Thomas Haden Church. Zack plays Zak, a Down Syndrome resident of an Old Age Home who befriends all the senior residents who help him escape to get to the wrestling school of his idol, Salt Water Redneck, and the adventure continues when Zak hides in a fishing boat and is taken under the wing of Tyler (LaBoeuf), a hard-luck thief also running away. This is a buddy movie, an escape movie, an outlaw adventure movie, a wrestling movie, and a romance, but most of all it’s a fable and different from all the movies described above because of its wonderful hero. Gottshagen is funny, sweet, and authentic in a rare leading role for an actor with Down Syndrome and he creates a memorable character in this charming film.

January 26, 2020
LION (US, 2016)
No one who sees this movie will leave without having shed a tear. Will it be in the beginning when the 5-year-old Saroo falls asleep at the train station where he has been separated from his brother? When he boards a train bound for we-know-not-where and survives by using his 5-year-old street smarts? When, as a successful young adult, he confesses to his devoted adoptive Australian mother (Nicole Kidman) his reasons for keeping secret his research into his origins, and she explains her reasons for wanting to adopt him? The amazing Sunny Pawar, who has no lines as the lost waif, almost steals the movie, but Dev Patel as the grown Saroo, and Kidman as his adoptive mother, break your heart with their performances. The magnificent score and photography help create a sense of the vastness of the country and the teeming mass of humanity in which one small life was saved.

February 9, 2020
THE FAREWELL (US, 2019)
Lulu Wang’s comedy drama of well-intentioned deception, in English and Mandarin, takes place primarily in China and deals with the way two different cultures address end of life experiences. When New Yorker, Billi, played by the rising rapper/actress/comedian Awkwafina, hears that her Grandmother in China, Nai Nai, is dying, she is overcome with grief and makes plans to visit with other members of the family for one final visit. The Chinese relatives, following Eastern customs of withholding health information from patients in the family, decide to concoct an elaborate scheme to disguise the real reason for the visit and make plans to stage a wedding for Billi’s cousin. What should be a joyous occasion is of course a difficult time for the family members who have to conceal their sorrow about their grandmother’s terminal illness. The movie deftly addresses the conflict between Eastern values of protecting the dying from the truth with Western values of allowing the individual to know and to be informed. Somehow this story of death and grief is told with a somewhat light touch with even a few laughs along the way. Still, don’t forget your box of tissues.

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Films show at 4:00 and popcorn is served.
Following each movie, we offer a simple soup and bread supper for anyone who would like to stay for a meal and a chance to talk about the film. The library has a signup sheet for volunteers to bring soup or bread.
February 23, 2020
MAIDEN (UK, 2019)

Even in 1989, there were still enough stereotypes about women’s abilities “to sink a yacht,” so when Tracy Edwards, a 24-year-old skipper of the Maiden entered her boat with all-female crew into England’s Whitbread Round the World Race, the odds were stacked against her. A number of journalists covering the race were doubtful about the “girls’” chances of even completing a leg, and one was heard to have referred to the crew as a “tinfal of tarts.” This crew was undaunted and determined, not just to complete, but to win, and scene after thrilling scene, shows how they strategized and risked death to finish the course. Why? Because they were told they couldn’t. Although this exciting documentary of an historic event should be enough, one could predict there will someday be a Hollywood remake.

March 8, 2020
LEAVE NO TRACE (US, 2018)

Writer Director Debra Granik follows her first film “Winter’s Bone” with this Sundance Festival entry which many reviewers say is an even better film. It portrays a family at the edges of society. The father, Will, (Ben Foster), a Vietnam Vet with what we infer is PTSD, and his teen-age daughter, played by an extraordinary young actress, Thomasin MacKenzie, live off the grid in a forest preserve near Portland, Oregon. The comfortable routine of their daily life in the sun-dappled enclave feels right and works for the pair; the daughter “Tom” is homeschooled and very well indeed. They regularly go to the city for medication and supplies which Will sells to other homeless vets. The action of the early part of the movie involves the efforts they make to stay hidden, to leave no trace. But eventually they are found by the authorities who want to send Tom to a proper school and find proper work for Will. But the social services system, which is depicted as being compassionate and well-intentioned, represents a world that they, father and daughter, are ill adapted for. This sets up a conflict and a conclusion to the film which is both unexpected and profoundly moving.

March 22, 2020
HELL OR HIGH WATER (US, 2016)

This cops and robbers western slowly plays out in the roasting and ruined Texas landscape of oil rigs and strip malls and speaks of poverty, lost dreams and desperation. With echoes of the Coen Brothers’ bleakly humorous films, the story begins with an amateurish bank robbery committed by brothers Toby and Tanner Howard (Chris Pine and Ben Foster). Their intentions and motivations are murky at first, but are revealed slowly as the film progresses. The other side of the story is told too, as the Texas Rangers, increasingly interested as more robberies take place, investigate the events. Laid-back lawman, played by Jeff Bridges and his trusty side kick, played by Gil Birmingham share companionable insults as they pursue the robbers and bring them to justice. This character-driven movie has its share of drama and suspense, with enough chases and close calls to keep you engaged. The four leads give stellar performances.

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