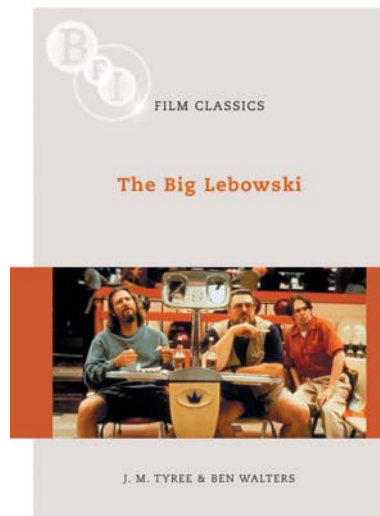


Books press release

BFI FILM CLASSICS



The Big Lebowski

J.M. Tyree & Ben Walters

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This July the BFI launches the redesign of its popular and acclaimed Film Classics series with three titles – *The Big Lebowski*, *Lawrence of Arabia* and *City Lights*.

Ethan and Joel Coen's *The Big Lebowski* was released in 1998 to general bafflement. A decade on, it has become a cult classic, inspiring a thriving circuit of 'Lebowski Fests' during which costumed devotees gather at bowling alleys and guzzle White Russians, across the US and worldwide – including in the UK, where two special events are planned this August (see below). Beyond its superabundance of deliciously quotable lines, how has the movie inspired such remarkable affection? And why does its critical stock continue to rise?

The film's unlikely anchor is Jeff Bridges' career-best performance as Jeffrey Lebowski, a fully-baked 1960s radical turned Venice Beach drop-out known to his friends as 'the Dude'. Mistaken for an identically-named grandee whose young trophy wife is in trouble, the Dude finds himself embroiled in an impossibly convoluted kidnap plot involving pornographers, nihilists and threats to his 'johnson'. Worst of all, it conflicts with his bowling commitments.

In part an irreverent pastiche of Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (as filmed by Howard Hawks), *The Big Lebowski* is also a jukebox of film history, littered with playful and subversive references to everything from Hitchcock and Altman to Busby Berkeley. This riot of addled quotations reflects the film's Los Angeles setting, a discombobulated world inhabited by flakes, phonies and poseurs with put-on identities.

Like many Coen works, the movie plays havoc with the conventions of the crime genre and the absurdities of classical American 'heroism'. But *The Big Lebowski* is also that rare thing, a comedy that gets richer, funnier and more affecting with each viewing. Beneath its breakneck pacing and foul-mouthed ribaldry, the Dude's story offers disarmingly humane lessons in the value of simple things: friendship, laughter and bowling.

About the authors

J.M. Tyree is a Wallace Stegner Fellow in Fiction at Stanford University.

Ben Walters is Deputy Film Editor at *Time Out London* and has written books on Orson Welles and *The Office*. **Ben Walters is available for interview.**

SUMMER OF LEBOWSKI

Two books, Barbican screening and the first Lebowski Fest UK events

The Barbican screens a double bill of *The Big Lebowski* with *The Big Sleep* on Sunday 15 July at 2pm, introduced by Ben Walters. This is followed on 2 August with the publication by Canongate Books of *I'm a Lebowski, You're a Lebowski* by Bill Green, Ben Peskoe, Will Russell and Scott Shuffitt; a treasure trove of trivia and commentary from the organisers of the hugely successful US Lebowski Fest circuit.

The authors have also organised the first two *Lebowski Fest UK* events, taking place in Edinburgh on 24 August and London on 30 August.

For further information on the BFI Film Classics book please contact:

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For further information on the Barbican double-bill please contact Barbican Media Relations Tel: 0207 638 5403 or e-mail: press@barbican.org.uk

For further information on *I'm a Lebowski*, *You're a Lebowski* and the UK Lebowski Fests please contact Angela Roberston at Canongate Books

Tel: 0131 524 9332 or e-mail: angela@canongate.co.uk

www.lebowskiFest.com

About the BFI

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About BFI FILM CLASSICS

The BFI Film Classics is a series of books that introduces, interprets and celebrates landmarks of world cinema. Each volume offers an argument for the film's 'classic' status, together with discussion of its production and reception history, its place within a genre or national cinema, an account of its technical and aesthetic importance, and in many cases, the author's personal response to the film.