

# MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

The Wizard of Oz (Victor Fleming 1939), produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

*REF N° 2006-10*

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## PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

### 1 SUMMARY

In 1939, as the world fell into the chaos of war, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer released a film that espoused kindness, charity, friendship, courage, fortitude, love and generosity. It was dedicated to the “young, and the young in heart” and today it remains one of the most beloved works of cinema, embraced by audiences of all ages throughout the world. It is one of the most widely seen and influential films in all of cinema history. *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) has become a true cinema classic, one that resonates with hope and love every time Dorothy Gale (the inimitable Judy Garland in her signature screen performance) wistfully sings “Over the Rainbow” as she yearns for a place where “troubles melt like lemon drops” and the sky is always blue.

George Eastman House takes pride in nominating *The Wizard of Oz* for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register because as custodian of the original Technicolor 3-strip nitrate negatives and the black and white sequences preservation negatives and soundtrack, the Museum has conserved these precious artefacts, thus ensuring the survival of this film for future generations. Working in partnership with the current legal owner, Warner Bros., the Museum has made it possible for this beloved film classic to continue to enchant and delight audiences. The original YCM negatives have been conserved at the Museum since 1975, and Warner Bros. recently completed our holdings of the film by assigning the best surviving preservation elements of the opening and closing black and white sequences and the soundtrack to our care. All current prints and video and digital access copies are derived from these materials.

*The Wizard of Oz* was to have been the official United States entry at the 1940 Cannes Film Festival, but the event was cancelled because of the outbreak of World War II. Over the years, *The Wizard of Oz* has become one of the most well known films ever produced and is the quintessential film adaptation of L. Frank Baum’s classic children’s tale *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Judy Garland’s *Dorothy*, Frank Morgan’s *Professor Marvel/Wizard*, Margaret Hamilton’s *Wicked Witch of the West*, Billie Burke’s *Glinda, the Good Witch*, Ray Bolger’s *Scarecrow*, Jack Haley’s *Tin Man* and Bert Lahr’s *Cowardly Lion* have become an integral part of global culture. It is fitting that this singular achievement in filmmaking should be added to the Register.

### 2 DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR

#### 2.1 Name (person or organisation)

Dr. Patrick Loughney, Curator of Motion Pictures  
George Eastman House/ International Museum of Photography and Film

#### 2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated

Dr. Loughney is the head of the Motion Picture Archive at George Eastman House and is responsible for the custody and management of this material.

#### 2.3 Contact person (s)

Dr. Patrick Loughney, Curator  
Motion Picture Department

- 2.4 Contact details (include address, phone, fax, email)  
George Eastman House  
900 East Avenue  
Rochester, N.Y. 14607-2298  
U.S.A.  
Email: ploughney@geh.org  
Phone: 1-585-271-3361 ext. 376  
Fax: 1-585-271-3970

### **3 *IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE***

- 3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

The Wizard of Oz (Victor Fleming 1939), produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

Original camera negative and earliest generation master elements

Material is the property of Warner Bros. Pictures, and is held in the permanent custody of George Eastman House, as above.

- 3.2 Description

Technicolor portion: Original nitrate camera negatives as specified below:  
23 reels nitrate b/w color separation YCM picture negatives

L81:0258:1

FYA8109, FYA8110, FYA8111, FYA8112, FYA8113, FYA8114, FYA8115, FYA8116

FCA8117, FCY8118, FCY8119, FCY8120, FCY8121, FCY8122, FCY8123, FCY8124

FMA8125, FMA8126, FMA8127, FMA8128, FMA8129, FMA8130, FMA8131, FMA8132

Black and white portion: triacetate picture master positive / picture duplicate negative 1A/B and 5B, as specified below:

L2003:0432:1  
TIA6781, TIA6782, TIA6783

Sound track negative:

L2003:0433:1

TWA6874, TWA6875, TWA6876, TWA6877, TWA6878, TWA6879, TWA6880,  
TWA6881, TWA6882, TWA6883

“The Wizard of Oz” is a Technicolor film with a black and white beginning and ending. The colour portion, which accounts for most of the film’s length, is set in the Land of Oz while the black and white portions are set on Dorothy’s farm in Kansas. The Technicolor camera simultaneously created three camera negatives, each representing a primary colour (red, green, blue) and their corresponding dyes (yellow, magenta, cyan).

The material above represents the earliest generation master material on the film now in existence. The Technicolor separation nitrate negatives of 1939 are the original camera negatives. The sound track negative represents the earliest surviving generation of the final sound mix. The black and white picture segments (the beginning and end of the film) are intermediate elements taken from the original negative, which decomposed decades ago.

**Provenance:** The dissolution of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in the 1970's precipitated the dispersal of their original nitrate camera negatives. George Eastman House received "The Wizard of Oz" along with hundreds of other reels of nitrate negatives during the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's.

**Analysis of material and condition of storage:** All the material listed above is in good condition and shows no signs of deterioration. Nitrate and triacetate elements are stored separately in film vaults at the Motion Picture Department's Louis B. Mayer Conservation Center in Rochester. Controlled temperature and humidity conditions are consistent with the world's best practice. The Department's regime of regular monitoring and inspection applies to this material.

High quality triacetate preservation copies have been made from the nitrate elements and are held under the same storage conditions and management regime. Consistent with the world's best practice, both nitrate and triacetate elements will be stored and conserved for their lifetime.

#### *Publications:*

Original publicity releases on the making of "The Wizard of Oz" can be found in *Daily Variety*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Liberty*, *Life*, *Look*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Los Angeles Examiner*, *The Motion Picture Herald*, *Motion Picture Daily*, *The New York Times* and *Variety* dating from February 17, 1938 to September 1939. The *American Film Institute Catalogue of Feature Films, 1931-1940* devotes over 3 ½ pages to the film. Other books on the film include Noel Langley, *The Wizard of Oz* (London: Faber & Faber, 1981); John Fricke, Jay Scarfone, William Stillman, *The Wizard of Oz: The Official 50th Anniversary Pictorial History* (1998); Aljean Harmetz, *The Making of the Wizard of Oz: Movie Magic and Studio Power in the Prime of MGM -- and the Miracle of Production No 1060* (1998); Mark Evan Swartz, *Oz Before the Rainbow: L. Frank Baum's The Wonderful Wizard of Oz on Stage and Screen to 1939* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Salman Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz* (London: British Film Institute, 1992).

Selected articles: *Variety*, Vol CCCLXXII nr 13 (Nov 9 1998); p 31 (McCarthy, Todd: "Enhanced reissue proves 'Wizard' still works magic"); *Variety*, Vol CCCLX nr 2 (Aug 14 1995); p 4 (Gerard, Jeremy: "Wizard from Oz"); *Sight & Sound* Vol II nr 4 (Aug 1992); p 42, 43 (Thompson, David: "A classic case"); *Radio Times* Vol CCLXXX nr 3655, Jan 29 1994, p 44 (Norman, Barry: "The Wizard of Oz"); *Literature/Film Quarterly* Vol IX nr 4 (1981); p 241-250 (Billman, C.W.: "I've seen the movie; Oz revisited"); *Journal of Popular Film and Television* Vol XXIII nr 4 (Winter 1996); p 146-153 (Page, Linda Rohrer: "Wearing the red shoes. Dorothy and the power of the female imagination in The Wizard of Oz"); *Journal of Popular Film and Television* Vol XVIII nr 2, Summer 1990, p 52-63 (Selcer, R.F.: "Home sweet movies. From Tara to Oz and home again"); *Jeune Cinéma* nr 206, Feb-Mar 1991, p 46-47 (Floret, M.-C.: "Le magicien d'Oz"); *Film-dienst* Vol XLVI nr 8, Apr 13 1993, p 27 (Messias, Hans: "Der Zauber von Oz"); *EPD Film*, Vol X nr 6, June 1993, p 45 (Arnold, Frank: "Der Zauber von Oz"); *Cinema Novo*, Vol III nr 15-16, Jan-Feb 1981, p 86-87 ("O feiticeiro de oz"); *Cinéma 72*, nr 163, Feb 1972, p 155 (Lefèvre, Raymond: "Le magicien d'Oz"); *Chaplin*, Vol XXXVIII nr 3, 264, 1996, p 44-45 (Kindblom, Mikaela: "Dissonanser i Oz"); *Chaplin*, Vol XXXV nr 1, 244, 1993, p 40-43 (Rushdie, Salman: "Oz. Resan till landet annanstans"); *American Cinematographer*, Vol LXXIX nr 12, Dec 1998, p 107-110 (Fisher, Bob: "The restoration of Oz").

"The Wizard of Oz" was brought to the screen three times before 1939: *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Selig Polyscope Company, 1910); *His Majesty the Scarecrow of Oz* (L. Frank Baum, 1914); *The Wizard of Oz* (Larry Semon, 1925). The Royal Shakespeare Company presented a stage version in

1987, and this production, including all the songs, was produced in the United States and Canada in 1988 and 1989.

*Referees:* International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; David Robinson, Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, Italy; David Francis, former Chief of the Motion Picture Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., United States; Edith Kramer, Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, California; Roger Smither, Imperial War Museum, London; Vigdis Lian, Norsk Filminstitut, Oslo, Norway, Martin Scorsese, Director and Producer; Norman Jewison, Director and Producer.

#### **4 JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

##### **4.1 Authenticity**

The nitrate negatives were received from M-G-M in 1975 and are self-evidently the original camera negatives. The preservation picture and track negatives were recently added to the collection and each transaction was thoroughly documented.

##### **4.2 World significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability**

Original camera negatives are, by definition, the first and best source material for any film and are irreplaceable. The further one gets from the original source material, the more information is lost. All existing film prints, duplicate negatives and electronic copies of “The Wizard of Oz” ultimately derive from this original.

The loss of this material would remove the possibility of recourse to the ultimate visual and sound quality and permanently diminish the integrity of the film.

Few films in history have been seen by so many people in so many countries over so long a time. *The Wizard of Oz* is deceptively simple, but it offers a powerful message that is timeless: that love, the courage of one's convictions and the bonds of friendship when united in a single cause, can overcome adversity and foster peace. It plays as a visual and visceral entertainment of unsurpassed popularity, as well as a morality tale that serves as a gentle reminder to people of all ages that the values it espouses are fundamental to our collective cultures. *The Wizard of Oz* continues to reach out to vast new audiences each time it is screened. Its pervasive imagery, its imaginative and stunning use of Technicolor (Dorothy's dreary sepia toned existence in Kansas pales in comparison to the dreamland of Oz that is drenched in Technicolor's magnificent palette of primary and secondary colours), its memorable music and its universal messages have become synonymous with the best of human aspirations and striving for a trouble free world. It has had many imitators, sequels and derivations but no equal. It has even created an alternative popular identity for a country (Australia is often called Oz).

##### **4.3 Criteria of (a) time (b) place (c) people (d) subject and theme (e) form and style**

**Time:** Created in 1939 when the world was marching to war, it was poignantly evocative of what may have seemed vain, but ultimately valid, hopes at the time. As attested by contemporary newsreels, during World War II allied soldiers sang “We’re off to see the Wizard, the wonderful Wizard of Oz” as a marching song. The film is very much of its time, while also timeless.

**Place and people:** Few films are as evocative of Hollywood at the peak of its creative, cultural and economic influence as the world’s dominant film industry. The depression of the early 1930s lay behind: the impact of television was yet to come. As the quintessential fantasy film, “The Wizard of Oz” symbolized the place of Hollywood as the creator of dreams and of the globally dominant star system.

**Subject and theme:** To visualize and seek a better and trouble-free world is a perennial human aspiration, and it has often been expressed through myth and fantasy. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the cinema came into its own as a universal expression of such myths and aspirations and perhaps no film more enduringly expresses this than “The Wizard of Oz.”

**Form and style:** The critical acclaim afforded to “The Wizard of Oz” and its director Victor Fleming is well documented. But it also exemplifies a type of production that is now virtually impossible to create. The three-strip Technicolor process offers a unique quality of colour rendition, although the process was largely discontinued in the 1950s for economic reasons. The technique of moving between black and white and colour images, once common in cinema, is here perfectly matched to the film’s subject matter but is now a largely discontinued and forgotten technique. *The Wizard of Oz* utilized the best technical effects available to MGM in 1939, and while its evil flying monkeys may not compare with today's digitally generated Spiderman, one can still appreciate the triumph of an extremely believable tornado created by studio technicians twisting a tube of fabric! Its script by Noel Langley, Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Woolf provides both an admirable distillation of Baum's story as well as memorable dialogue that captures the characters with precision, wit and pathos. *The Wizard of Oz* stands at the top of its fantasy genre - later films such as *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971), *Mary Poppins* (1964) and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (1968), while owing a debt to its style, all pale in comparison to the symmetry, beauty and power of this most enduring of classic films.

#### 4.4 Issues of rarity, integrity, threat and management

**Integrity:** Its content is complete. The original black and white picture negative elements, as explained above, no longer exist but early generation elements of them are preserved.

**Threat:** The material is not under threat.

**Management plan:** The conservation of the film is assured by a management regime of regular inspection and proper temperature and humidity controls.

## 5 LEGAL INFORMATION

5.1. Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)  
Warner Bros.  
4000 Warner Boulevard  
Burbank, California 91522-6114  
Contact: Steven Anastasi, Vice President, Worldwide Inventory  
P: 818-977-2323  
F: 818-954-4193

5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to owner)  
George Eastman House  
900 East Avenue  
Rochester, N.Y. 14607-2298  
Contact: Dr. Patrick Loughney, Curator, Motion Picture Department  
P: 1-585-271-3361 x 376  
F: 1-585-271-3970

5.3 Legal status:  
(a) Category of ownership: Warner Bros.  
  
(b) Accessibility: Available in 35mm prints, video, DVD  
  
(c) Copyright status: Warner Bros.

(d) Responsible administration: George Eastman House

**6 MANAGEMENT PLAN**

6.1 Is there a management plan in existence for this documentary heritage? YES

The Museum will continue to maintain the original and best surviving preservation elements of “The Wizard of Oz” in the best climate controlled environment possible (cold storage at 40 degrees F and 30RH) by performing regular inspections of all material and alerting the owner to any change in the physical condition of the elements.

**7 CONSULTATION**

7.1 Dr. Loughney has discussed this nomination with Warner Bros. executives and they have enthusiastically endorsed his proposal. As custodian of the invaluable nitrate color YCM separation negatives, black and white preservation elements and the soundtrack, George Eastman House is fully supportive of Dr. Loughney’s submission of the “Wizard of Oz” to the Register.

**PART B – SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION**

**8 ASSESSMENT OF RISK**

8.1 All film materials are at risk from chemical deterioration of their material base, be it nitrate cellulose, diacetate, triacetate or polyester. Long-term studies have shown that providing a clean, stable temperature and humidity controlled environment with temperatures set for 40 degrees F with a humidity average of 30-35 RH is the best way to ensure the continued existence of such material. Prolonged exposure to high temperatures and humidity encourage the destruction of the plastic base by the release of gases and chemicals causing the film to shrink, warp, buckle and eventually, to become unprojectable and unprintable. In the case of nitrate based film, the silver image begins to fade and discolour; the emulsion (the image carrier) becomes sticky; the film becomes soft, blisters appear and the film begins to ooze thick “honey”; the entire film congeals into a solid mass; and finally the base disintegrates into a pungent brown powder.

Because the film elements have been stored properly, they remain in excellent condition and there is every expectation that they will continue to be accessible well into the next century.

**9 ASSESSMENT OF PRESERVATION**

9.1 “The Wizard of Oz” has been fully preserved by means of photochemical duplication of the original elements. It has also been digitally transferred to master elements in that medium.

**PART C - LODGEMENT**

This nomination is lodged by:

(Please print name) Dr. Patrick Loughney

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(Signature)..... (Date)...16.02.2006.....