

fourth of july

10 Movies To Stream In Honor of America’s Birthday

Tribune News Service

Patriotism on screen comes in all different forms. It’s politicians, athletes, soldiers, pilots, journalists — people from all walks of life, coming together in ordinary and extraordinary ways and making audiences celebrate the themes and values that make our country great. All manner of movies can be patriotic — even “Clueless” is patriotic, if you think about it — but to celebrate America’s 250th anniversary, we decided to highlight 10 films that really lean into their themes of patriotism, from modern classics to just plain classics. Grab a hot dog, microwave some popcorn and sit down with any of these favorites that have red, white and blue coursing through their DNA.

‘Mr. Smith Goes to Washington’ (1939)

James Stewart stars as the Mr. Smith of the title, a rookie U.S. senator who goes to Washington, D.C. to clean up corruption in the town. Nominated for 11 Oscars (including best picture, which it lost to a little movie called “Gone With the Wind”), “Mr. Smith” has gone on to become an enduring American classic and is representative of what is historically considered one of the all-time best movie years. (Now streaming on Tubi)

‘Yankee Doodle Dandy’ (1942)

Jimmy Cagney won best actor for his portrayal of Broadway star George M. Cohan in this beloved musical, which finds Cohan looking back over his life from inside the White House as he is awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. The film was nominated for a total of eight Oscars, including best picture, which it ended up losing to “Mrs. Miniver.” (Available for rental)

‘All the President’s Men’ (1976)

Journalism. It’s kind of a big deal! And its importance is absolutely foundational to our nation, as exemplified in this political thriller that tells the real story of Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward (Robert Redford) and Carl Bernstein (Dustin Hoffman) and their investigation of the Watergate scandal, which ended with Richard Nixon’s resignation from the office of the presidency. (Available for rental)

‘Rocky IV’ (1985)

It’s a Cold War battle for the ages as American muscle

(represented by Sylvester Stallone) clashes with the Iron Curtain (Dolph Lundgren, a Swede, but who’s counting?) in this macho showdown, which features James Brown singing “Living in America” as Apollo Creed (Carl Weathers) makes his way to the boxing ring. What’s more American than that? (Now streaming on Netflix)

‘Field of Dreams’ (1989)

You know we couldn’t go much further in this list without a baseball movie. So here’s a classic tearjerker about baseball, fathers and the ghosts of our past, with Kevin Costner in the lead, who could have his own separate list of 10 patriotic movies that he has starred in. (Now streaming on Netflix)

‘Glory’ (1989)

Ed Zwick’s Civil War movie nabbed Denzel Washington his first Oscar, for his performance as Private Silas Trip, an escaped slave who joins the Union Army in its first all-Black regiment. Matthew Broderick, Morgan Freeman, Andre Braugher and Cary Elwes also star. (Now streaming on MGM+)

‘Armageddon’ (1998)

A gang of oil drillers are sent into space to explode an asteroid before it hits Earth in this big, loud and gloriously dumb action extravaganza from director Michael Bay, who makes big, loud and gloriously dumb action extravaganzas better than anyone. With Bruce Willis, Ben Affleck, Steve Buscemi, Liv Tyler and a totally awesome Aerosmith song. (Available for rental)

‘Miracle’ (2004)

This riveting sports drama about the gold medal-winning 1980 U.S. men’s hockey team set a high bar for the eventual movie about the 2026 U.S. gold medal winners, which we can only assume is being penned somewhere right now. (Who will play Jack Hughes?) With Kurt Russell, Noah Emmerich and more. (Now streaming on Netflix and Disney+)

‘Hidden Figures’ (2016)

In this true story, Taraji P. Henson, Octavia Spencer and Janelle Monáe star as three unheralded mathematicians who played a crucial role in America’s Space Race and helped send a rocket to the moon. Also with Kevin Costner, whom we told you would pop up on this list again! (Now streaming on HBO Max)

‘Top Gun: Maverick’ (2022)

The movie that brought audiences back to theaters after COVID is a rip-roaring, action-packed thrill ride starring one of our great American movie stars, Tom Cruise. American exceptionalism at its finest! (Now streaming on Paramount+)



Rachel Govola | Daily Sun

Denis Milonas performs as John Adams during Smash Productions’ performance of “1776” on Tuesday at Savannah Center. The musical follows the debates of the Second Continental Congress leading up to the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Sit Down, John! Patriotic Musical Goes Out With a Bang

Nearly every seat was filled for both showings of Smash Productions’ performance of “1776.”

By TAYLOR STRICKLAND
Daily Sun Senior Writer

In honor of the United States’ 250th anniversary, Smash Productions took audiences back to where it all began in “1776.”

The Tony Award-winning musical follows the debates and conflicts of the Second Continental Congress leading up to the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It features key historical figures such as John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Richard Henry Lee and Edward Rutledge as they debate, in the words of Pennsylvania delegate John Dickinson, to “forsake Hastings and Magna Carta, Strongbow and Lionhearted, Drake and Marlborough, Tudors, Stuarts and Plantagenets” in order to build a more perfect union. “‘1776’ sends a powerful message that from the time of our founding, our country’s leaders have had strong disagreements but historically, we’ve always managed to move the country forward for the betterment of all — even

when things looked bleak,” said Tim Casey, director of the production. “We tend to see our current conflicts as new but they have been part of our history from the very beginning.”

Produced by Susan Feinberg and Bob Stehman, the Smash Productions’ show featured a large cast full of local talent. Denis Milonas starred as John Adams, Barry Corlew as Benjamin Franklin, John Kase as Thomas Jefferson, Stehman as John Dickinson, Casey as Edward Rutledge, Jaime Sandoval as Richard Henry Lee, Sue Schuler as Abigail Adams, Lisa Donohue as Martha Jefferson and

19 others as either Founding Fathers, military offers or miscellaneous congressional staff. Nearly every seat — and every parking space, for that matter — was filled for both showings of the production Monday and Tuesday at Savannah Center. Patrons, star-spangled themselves, entered the Scarlett O’Hara theater through a lobby decked out in red, white and blue. Guests even could take photos with life-size cutouts of presidents gathered around the room. Debbie May, a new Village of Springdale resident, was delighted to see the unified display of patriotism. “Everybody participated with their outfits,” May said. ‘1776’ is a text-heavy musical, favoring dialogue over song and dance. It runs for two hours and 45 minutes on average, and it includes 13 songs in total. Most audience members

were taken by the first song, “Sit Down, John,” a humorous number that establishes Congress’ increasing exasperation at Adams’ dogged pursuit of independence. The audience also seemed to favor any song that featured Sue Schuler as Abigail Adams, such as “Till Then,” “Yours, Yours, Yours” and “Compliments.” “Any production that Sue Schuler is in is excellent,” said Lu Anne Smallwood, a Village of Springdale resident. “I think I’ve been to all of her shows. I wasn’t expecting so much of a story line, but it’s funny.”

Another audience favorite was the song that takes place right before intermission, “Momma Look Sharp.” Unlike the majority of the musical, it does not feature any of the Founding Fathers. Instead, it is an ode to the common man — the soldiers, laborers and everyday people who pay the price of war. “It moved me to tears,” said Karine Kuehn, an Ocala resident. “I think about how they fought back then, when they would just stare at each other and go in, knowing they were going to die.” Kuehn’s friends, Ronnie and Frank Doughty, agreed, calling the performances of the unnamed courier (Ben Keefe), custodian Andrew McNair (Vic Marsich) and his unnamed apprentice (Greg Senholzi) “wonderful” and “haunting” all at once. But for the most part, audiences found the musical to be a good romp. “It is fun,” Ronnie said. “This is funny, and there are some good lines — really good lines.” For more information about Smash Productions, go to smashproductionsfl.com. Senior writer Taylor Strickland can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5334, or taylor.strickland@thevillagesmedia.com.

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