

POP CANDY

Unwrapping pop culture's hip and hidden treasures



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Queue Tips: What docs are worth renting?

Are you staring at an empty Netflix queue? Well, this is your lucky day ...

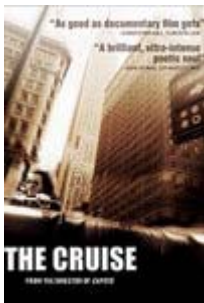


Today I'm launching "Queue Tips," a five-part series of movie recommendations inspired by your frequent requests to peek at my Netflix queue. Each Wednesday I'll offer 20 rental recs in a particular genre and invite you to comment on my picks and offer your own suggestions.

This week I name 20 documentaries, but don't expect to see *Super Size Me* and *Bowling for Columbine* below. I tried to list movies that a) you may not know about and b) cover a variety of topics. With any luck, you'll discover something new.

Here they are, in alphabetical order:

1. [American Movie \(1999\)](#) -- Chris Smith's flick follows one of the hardest working men *not* in show business, Milwaukee-based film fanatic **Mark Borchardt**. Borchardt dreams of being a big-time Hollywood director and enlists his family, friends and neighbors to help him make a low-budget horror movie, *Coven*. He learns a lot along the way, though no one bothers to tell him how to correctly pronounce his movie's name.



2. [The Cruise \(1998\)](#) -- I'm not going to stop mentioning this movie until everyone I know has seen it. It stars **Timothy "Speed" Levitch**, a New York City tour guide who waxes poetic atop buses full of strangers. It'll leave you with plenty of quotable lines about "masculine turns" and "sexual slacks," and you just may see NYC in a different light. Directed by **Bennett Miller** (*Capote*).

3. [Gates of Heaven \(1980\)](#) -- All **Errol Morris** documentaries are worth a peek, but this one is by far my favorite -- it examines a pet cemetery in California, its employees and the people who lay their pets to rest there. You can't write characters better than these.

4. [Heavy Metal Parking Lot \(1986\)](#) -- What happens when you tote a video camera to a parking lot before a **Judas Priest** concert? The results are like a time capsule of '80s hair metal. [These clips](#) should give you an idea of what to expect.

5. [How to Draw a Bunny \(2002\)](#) -- We see documentaries about famous artists all the time, but what about the ones who never achieved the recognition they deserved? Director **John W. Walter** examines the life and death of contemporary artist [Ray Johnson](#) and

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6. [The Last Waltz \(1978\)](#) -- I know many of you have seen **Martin Scorsese's** flick about **The Band's** last concert, but I'm including it for anyone who has been putting it off. You're not a big fan of The Band? It doesn't matter -- there's bound to be someone you like here, whether it's **Neil Young**, **Joni Mitchell**, **Emmylou Harris** or **Bob**

Dylan. You hate concert films? It's much more than that, and even if it weren't, it's so beautifully shot you forget you're watching a concert. See it, if only to gaze upon **Van Morrison's** crazy outfit.

7. [Lost in La Mancha \(2002\)](#) -- **Terry Gilliam's** dream epic, *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*, turns into a disaster over the course of this doc, which was probably intended as a harmless "making of" piece but evolved into a cringe-worthy feature. The magic words: **Johnny Depp** stars.

8. [LoudQUIETloud: A Film About the Pixies \(2006\)](#) -- This film just came out on DVD, so I wanted mention it ... though at times it gets a little *too* close to the band, as in scenes where we see a shirtless **Frank Black** sprawled on a bed in his hotel room. Don't say I didn't warn you.

9. [Paris Is Burning \(1990\)](#) -- "Vogueing" didn't start with **Madonna**, and this doc offers the video evidence. Through the eyes of director **Jennie Livingston**, we see the world of New York's elaborate "drag balls," featuring some of the city's most exuberant and talented performers.

10. [Pie in the Sky: The Brigid Berlin Story \(2000\)](#) -- My favorite member of **Andy Warhol's** Factory allowed directors **Vincent** and **Shelly Dunn Fremont** into her home for this often amusing flick -- and that's quite a feat, considering she's known to be camera-shy. Warhol enthusiasts will enjoy the vintage footage and Berlin's recorded phone conversations.

11. [Rock School \(2005\)](#) -- If you liked *School of Rock*, you owe it to the real rock kids to see where their story originated. Instructor **Paul Green** is much more abrasive and not nearly as funny as **Jack Black**, though his undying passion for rock 'n' roll wins the affections of his students.

12. [Salesman \(1969\)](#) -- Before they made *Grey Gardens* and *Gimme Shelter*, **Albert** and **David Maysles** teamed up for this doc about door-to-door bible salesmen. The Criterion Collection edition of the DVD includes commentary, a TV interview, photos and more bonus material.

13. [Searching for Debra Winger \(2002\)](#) -- **Rosanna Arquette** directs this doc about the challenges of being an actress in Hollywood. She nabs scores of interesting interview subjects, including **Salma Hayek**, **Laura Dern**, **Diane Lane**, **Martha Plimpton** and **Debra Winger** herself.

14. [Searching for the Wrong-Eyed Jesus \(2005\)](#) -- I mentioned *Jesus* a few months ago, and I figured it couldn't hurt to give it another shout-out: **Andrew Douglas'** film about the American South mixes musical performances, dazzling cinematography and a bizarre road trip. My only complaint is that it's only 82 minutes long.

15. [The Staircase \(2004\)](#) -- I just watched this eight-part documentary last week, and it blew me away. The strange-but-true story follows a wealthy novelist accused of murdering his wife. He contends she fell down the stairs, but strange evidence crops up throughout the film to cast doubt in viewers' minds. If you only watch one movie on this list, it should be this one. (It also

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ran as a series on the Sundance Channel.)

16. [Stoked: The Rise and Fall of Gator \(2002\)](#) -- Those who followed '80s skateboard culture will be particularly interested in this piece about **Mark "Gator" Rogowski**, a skater who reached the peak of his game ... then fell harder than anyone could've imagined.

17. [This So-Called Disaster \(2003\)](#) -- What really happens behind the scenes of a play? Subtitled *Sam Shepard Directs the Late Henry Moss*, director **Michael Almereyda** spies on Shepard, **Sean Penn**, **Nick Nolte**, **Cheech Marin** and others as they prepare to stage a production. The result gives us an unvarnished look into actors' differing techniques as well as their off-camera behavior.

18. [Unknown White Male \(2005\)](#) -- One day **Doug Bruce** woke up with no memory of who or where he was. His friend **Rupert Murray** documents his entire experience with amnesia on tape, from being re-introduced to his family to tasting foods for the "first" time. Upon its release, [some controversy erupted](#) over how much of the film was true, though Murray contends it's 100% real.

19. [Unzipped \(1995\)](#) -- If you're amused by **Isaac Mizrahi** and/or the fashion world, you may get a kick out of this doc, which was made when there was still such a thing as a "supermodel." Even my husband became sucked into this movie after a few minutes. Afterward, we even ran out and rented one of Isaac's favorite movies, *The Red Shoes*.

20. [The Up series \(continuing\)](#) -- Many of you already know about this, but just in case, here's a quick synopsis: In 1964 filmmaker **Michael Apted** followed a group of 7-year-old British children with the plan to track them down every seven years. Amazingly, he's stuck with the plan, churning out [7 Up](#), [14 Up](#) (catching up with them at age 14), [21 Up](#), and so on. Apted's latest installment, [49 Up](#), arrives on DVD Nov. 14.

Any other thoughts or suggestions? Chime in. Next week: Twenty comedies.

Posted at 11:25 AM/ET, 10/18/2006 in Movies | [Permalink](#)

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I believe you are missing one of the all-time greatest Documentaries of our generation. The title says it all, "Hands On A Hardbody." If you haven't seen it yet, I'll give you a brief synopsis. A Texas Nissan dealership runs an annual contest to see who can keep their hand on a Nissan Hardbody Truck the longest, whoever keeps it on the truck for the longest wins. These characters are real and they are small town folk; it is pure "human drama" as one contestant calls it. Once you hit play, hilarity ensues.

Posted by: David C. | [Oct 18, 2006 11:34:13 AM](#)

Patriot Act

Doesn't matter where you fall on the political spectrum, or how you feel about the war in Iraq. This is a great documentary showing what conditions are like in Iraq and the lengths some will go to in order to support the troops.

Hilarious and, yes, even heartwarming, this unconventional documentary captures a war-torn Iraq through the eyes of comedian Jeffrey Ross, who, with camera in hand, agreed to join Drew Carey on a USO tour.