

THE CULT MOVIE VAULT OPENS WAX HORROR!



High Plains Library District

Community

JANUARY 2024

2023 Check Outs

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highplains
Library District

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What do **YOU** have to **SAY** about our newsletter?

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2023 Check Outs

Rear-View Mirror

As we put 2023 in the rear-view mirror, we thought it'd be fun to take a look at what YOU read and listened to the most in 2023!

The Books You Checked Out Most in HPLD Libraries:

1. *The Best Birthday* adapted by Mary Man-Kong ; illustrated by Federica Salfo, Francesco Legramandi, and Charles Pickens.
2. *Elmo is Mindful: how to stay focused, calm, and kind* [illustrated by Joe Mathieu].
3. *This side of Paradise* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

4. *Splat the Cat Sings Flat* by Rob Scotton.
5. *Kiss, Kiss, Pout-Pout Fish* by Deborah Diesen ; pictures by Dan Hanna.
6. *You Don't Bug Me!* [Launchpad Kit]
7. *Never Touch a Spider!* illustrated by Stuart Lynch ; written by Rosie Greening.
8. *Fire Crew!* by Frank Berrios ; illustrated by the Disney Storybook Art Team.
9. *The Valentine is Missing!* text by Cynthia Platt ; illustrations by Anne Passchier.
10. *Spider-Man: phonics collection: short vowels* / Scholastic Inc.

...Didn't know Spider-Man was into phonics. Is there anything Spidey CAN'T DO!?

The Music You Checked Out Most:

1. The Very Best of the Doobie Brothers.
2. Timeless: the all-time greatest hits / Bee Gees.
3. The Definitive Collection / ABBA.
4. Platinum Collection: greatest hits by Queen I, II & III.
5. Motor City Madness: the ultimate Funkadelic Westbound records compilation.
6. Folie À deux / Fall Out Boy.
7. A Neil Diamond Christmas / Neil Diamond.
8. The Razors Edge / AC/DC.
9. Anyone Who Had a Heart: the best of Burt Bacharach.
10. The Best of Jethro Tull.

TBH, I've never forgiven Jethro Tull for winning best "Hard Rock/Heavy Metal" album over Metallica's ... And Justice for All in 1989. That wound runs deep.

The Audiobooks You Checked Out Most

1. Free Fire by C.J. Box.
2. The Case of the Missing Cat written and read by John R. Erickson.
3. Long Shadows by David Baldacci.
4. Little Fox and the Wild Imagination written by Jorma Taccone ; art by Dan Santat.
5. The Further Adventures of Hank the Cowdog written and read by John R. Erickson.
6. On Earth as it is in Heaven Adventures in Odyssey

7. Jet the Cat: (is not a cat) by Phaea Crede, Terry Runyan.
8. Adventures in Odyssey. Volume 19, Passport to Adventure
9. Still Life by Louise Penny.
10. The Mystery at the Alamo by Gertrude Chandler Warner.

We've got a dog, a cat, and a fox in the top 10. Note to any aspiring authors: if you want to get checked out at HPLD, get a critter in that book!

Top Hoopla Checkouts (all audiobooks):

1. Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by JK Rowling
2. Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt
3. The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes by Suzanne Collins
4. Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire by JK Rowling
5. Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix by JK Rowling

Hmm...definitely a them here...

Top Libby/Overdrive Checkouts:

1. Fourth Wing by Rebecca Yarros (audio)
2. Wrong Place Wrong Time by Gillian McAllister (audio)
3. Verity by Colleen Hoover (ebook)
4. The Bodyguard by Katherine Center (audio)
5. The Four Winds by Kristin Hannah (audio)

Another note for writers, I guess put "four" in your title in some way.

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Library Bro **Reading Resolutions**

It's me, your Library Bro. I'm back, baby! Pumping iron, using the library like a true library warrior, and also drinking bizarre shakes made from powders that come in GIGANTIC white plastic barrels. Seriously, why do these things all come in the same container? Can't we get something that fits in a cabinet, maybe a cereal box shape or something?

And how come these are all about protein and mass gain, but none of them even MENTION reading speed?

Anyway, after last year, my mind is SWOLL from all the sweet books I read and all the awesome events I attended at the library, and this year promises to be no different. I'm encouraging you to take the journey to Library Bro-Hood with me!

Just in case you needed a reminder: A Library Bro is like a Gym Bro, or a Finance Bro, but instead of bro-ing down at the gym and hitting big PR's, and instead of BUY SELL or whatever Finance Bros do, Library Bros use their library to the highest possible level. We're maximizers, always looking to put up those big numbers of books, pages, and bookish fun at the end of the year.

You don't have to be a guy to be a Library Bro, by the way. Not at all. Because Library Bros accept all. I mean, #LibraryBroLife is not for everyone, it's a life of intensity and sticktoitiveness that not everyone is cut out for, so we can hardly afford to turn people away for, well, ANY reason.

Now, as a Library Bro with some years under my weight

belt, which also has a pouch for my library card in case I finish an audiobook mid-workout and need to dial up bae, Libby, I've gone through the wringer of reading resolutions. I've done some good ones, some bad ones, and a whole bunch that lasted me until about March.

So, allow me to share some of the best ones I've got:

Accept Yourself as the Reader You Already Are

Look, I'm 5'9", and I'm never going to dunk a basketball. I have to accept that when it comes to living out my *NBA Jam* fantasies, I'll have to stick to the Sega Genesis.

But that's okay, that doesn't mean I can't shoot 3s!

When it comes to reading, I'm just not a big fan of Classics. I get bored too easily, and I usually end up regretting taking another swing at *Jane Eyre* and quitting well before we get to the attic. I mean, R.L. Stine told us there was "something" in the basement, and we were in the basement, checking it out, on like page 7. But when we're in *Jane Eyre*, the "something" in the attic isn't investigated until, like, the end.

This year, I'm accepting that I do have some reading limitations. I'm not the perfect, all-around reader who enjoys everything, and you know what? I've made my peace with it. Instead of straining myself to the point of injury, getting stuck on *Jane Eyre* to the point where I'm

not reading ANYTHING, I'm going to accept that book just isn't for me and move on with my life, and more than that, I'm going to be okay with it.

Fill out an HPLD Personalized Reading List, and just be honest! Tell us who you are, not who you think you SHOULD be, and you'll get back a bunch of books that you, the real you, will love.

Ignore the Mirror

A lot of times, us Library Bros have to actively ignore the mirror. It's not easy, we look great, especially after a nice set of bicep curls.

But the mirror is, in fact, your worst enemy in the gym. And the mirror is your worst enemy in reading.

This year, I'm taking the competitive factors out of my reading. No more Goodreads challenges, no more big reading goals about pages and numbers of books finished.

Instead, my goal is to enjoy the journey, bros. Enjoy the book I'm reading now instead of always thinking about what's next, whether I'm on schedule, and all that jazz (I don't care for jazz, so when I say, "all that jazz," just know I'm using "jazz" in place of a swear word that you can sometimes smell on the air here in Greeley, if you get me).

It's like ignoring the mirror at the gym: Instead of looking

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at yourself, turn around, and FEEL good. FEELING good is a lot better than looking good, take it from someone who has done both at different times.

[Libby makes it super easy](#) to enjoy the journey. With all the free eBooks over there, you can find something you love. And, because it's all FREE with your library card, you can abandon something you don't like without feeling any guilt over wasted cash.

Believe There's Something New Out There

I've had many a year when I thought, "Well, I've read all the books I'm going to REALLY enjoy." And then, boom, I pick up [Berserk](#), and it's my favorite thing of ever.

You have to believe that your favorite book might still be out there, and you just haven't read it yet. If you haven't read a new favorite in a long time, try something really different. Give a shot to something you haven't looked at in years, and see if maybe it hits different this time.

Believe there's something great out there, and get after it this year!

[Explore the Advanced Search on Novelist](#). It lets you put in all kinds of unusual stuff to find a new read that you'll love, and there are lots of lists over there that are different from the same 10 titles you'll see recommended over and over again. They've got subjects you didn't even know had names before. It's awesome.

Did YOU have a great library experience? Like, ever?

If you're reading HPLD's newsletter, we're betting the answer is "Yes." Or possibly even "YES!"

To let our staff know that they're having an impact in your community, we're proposing a [quick letter-writing campaign](#). Write your favorite HPLD staff member a letter, and if they're up for it, we'll ask them to read it out loud for the first time on video. That way, they can see how much you appreciate them, and you can see how much your words mean to them!

Cult Movie Vault:

WAXQUELS:

Double the Wax, Double the Fun!

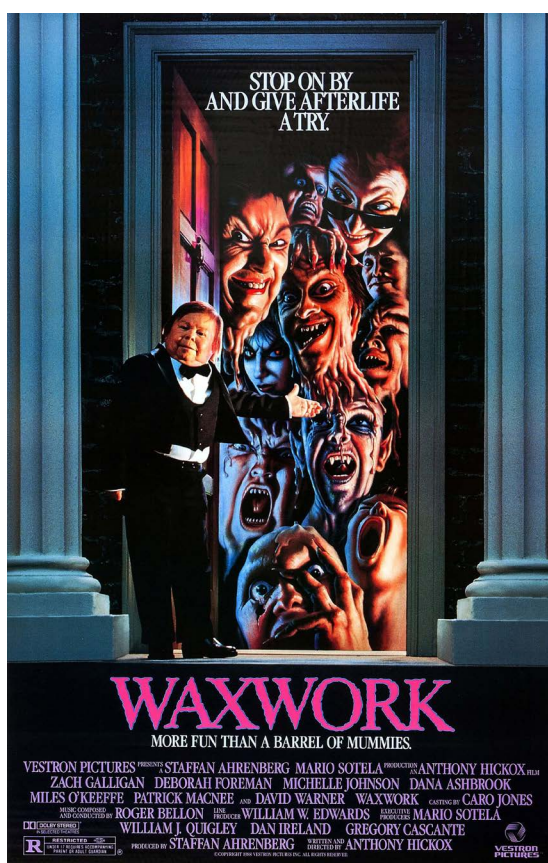
And that's NOT just what the doctor said when he had to irrigate my ears one time because of an overabundance of wax. No, he said something like, "Wow, gross!" Which seemed unprofessional, but enthusiastic, so good enough for me.

Welcome to this edition of HPLD's Cult Movie Vault, the semi-monthly column where we talk just a little bit about some movies because of a curse or something. I don't know, I can't even remember how this happened...alien prison? Gremlin? Ghoulie? Munchie? Spaced Invader?

This time we have a DOUBLE Feature with *Waxwork* (1988) and *House of Wax* (2005), or, as I like to call them, Waxquels.

Why "Waxquels?"

Well, the holidays just passed, which means I participated in my annual Scrabble tournament. It's a little grandiose to call it a tournament when I play one game, get totally



destroyed, and go home in a huff, but in my defense, most tournaments, whether they be athletic, intelligence-based, or skill-based, go like that for me.

Do I lose the Scrabble tournament so badly every year that once I demanded we rotate the board counterclockwise and each person move into the seat on their right because I could only assume the drubbing I was taking was due to a curse placed on the western side of the board and/or table?

Yeah. Yeah, I did that.

This year, as I stared at the useless letters on my little wooden thing that holds the other little wooden things in Scrabble, I came up with a great word that'd win me the day: Waxquel.

Unfortunately, this was not a word as of 2023, and I went home in tears. But in 2024, with the publication of this newsletter, "Waxquel" will now enter the lexicon, as backed up by a LIBRARY newsletter.

The Waxquels

Right off, something both of these movies have in common is that they are remakes of older movies. The original *Waxwork* was made in 1924, and the remake came out in 1988. 64 years! Maybe that's what the Beatles were talking about with their song "When I'm 64," the appropriate length of time between *Waxwork* reboots.

A person who was born when the first *Waxwork* came out could be retired by the time the remake was in theaters. They could've lived a full life! Got an education, had a career, children, learned to craft, I don't know, wooden flutes or something. This would be a completely different person, justifying the statement: The same man can never step into a theater twice to see *Waxwork*.

Someone born when *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* came out wouldn't even be able to get themselves to the theater to see *Spider-Man: Homecoming* without someone calling the police, which is the correct thing to do when a toddler is out and about on its own. The last thing we want is a *Baby's Day Out* situation on our hands.

House of Wax has a pretty healthy time chunk between its two iterations as well, the first one being in 1953 and the second in 2005, and perhaps most importantly to the remake's feel, the 2005 version came out after the explosion of 2000's bands such as Prodigy, The Deftones, and Marilyn Manson.

Let's start with the *Waxwork* and then get to *House of Wax*. Because all (wax)work and no...wait, that doesn't work. (Wax) Work before play...house...I guess...

Waxwork

The first time I saw *Waxwork*, I was NOT convinced. It's kind of slow, you know what's happening way before anyone in the movie does, and it all feels a little drawn out.

But then you get to the last 10%, and your life is forever changed.

The basic setup here is that there's a wax museum with a bunch of your classic monsters in it: your Draculas, your Phantoms of the Opera, your Copyright-Safe Zombies, your Public Domain Terrors (although Jason doesn't appear, Kane Hodder, who often played Jason in the *Friday the 13th* series, DOES play Frankenstein's monster).

If wax museum goers cross the barriers and go into the

exhibits, they find themselves sucked into the world of those exhibits. Which, to be fair, I'm on the wax museum's side, here. All these people have to do is respect the velvet ropes and nothing bad happens. I bet lots of museum curators watch this movie and think, "Well, that's comeuppance for you!"

The characters are slowly entering exhibits and getting trapped with the monsters, including the least believable part of the movie when a jock character is super intrigued by being in the world of *The Phantom of the Opera* (yeah right, we ALL knew a quarterback who was into serialized French novels).

There's more story, I don't know, a bunch of nonsense about some guy collecting the 18 most evil objects on Earth or something like that in order to rule the Federation of Planets or whatever.

None of this matters because the ending is about to jump out and slap me right in the face.

I'm not a big "the ending makes it worthwhile" guy, and *Waxwork* is the one exception I make to that rule, because it's TOTALLY worth it.



After seeing the end, I almost suspect the boredom of the first 7/8 of the movie was intentional, we'd be lulled into a stupor, and then when the ending hits, it's like waking up because someone jammed a beer funnel filled with 5-Hour Energy in your mouth, clamped headphones to your head that are blasting Dragonforce, and you're also freefalling from a plane. Any one of those

things would be jarring, all three is a lot, and coming straight from sleep into that scenario, that's kind of the *Waxwork* effect.

Okay, as we approach the end of the movie, everyone knows the wax museum exhibits are real, and the various monsters are entering our world.

Or ARE they!?

Because a whole bunch of grandpas have something to say about it, and they rush into the museum with axes and other hand weapons to do battle with a bugman, a mummy, Moriarty, vampires, The Marquis de Sade, zombies, a demon baby, a giant man-eating plant, a werewolf, a pirate.

I'm not really sure why all the good guys are elderly men, but I guess good for those actors. You don't get cast as the

weird old man with the shovel in *Home Alone*, and it's slim pickings out there.

This giant melee with no seeming sense or reason to it is almost indescribable. Explosions, people being shot, stabbed...it feels like it was storyboarded when the director put a 7 year-old into a room, somebody dumped a complete mishmash of action figures out on the floor, and then whatever the kid did with a ninja, a barbarian, a space man, a vampire, all of that was recorded and re-created in the big battle scene that wraps up this movie.

By the time we get to this sequence in the movie, the movie's body count is a respectable 20. By the end, which comes in about 10, we're up to 74. In the climax of this movie, someone is exploded, stabbed, or bursts into flames about every 20 seconds.

I did manage to dig up [a little background](#) on this movie and learned a little bit about why it probably felt like a rushed, chaotic collision of maniacal energy, and the reason it felt like that is because it WAS like that.

Let's talk a moment about completion bond companies.

In film, a completion bond is an agreement between the movie's production team, the investors, and a bond company, and what it does is guarantee that a movie will be delivered on time and on budget.

Now, let's say your movie is NOT going to wrap shooting on schedule.

The completion bond company can take on a few options to get things on track: They can pay back the investors, which is a super expensive proposition, they can get involved and basically watch over production's shoulder to make sure things are getting finished and the budget is being respected, OR they can assert their right to completely take over the production and finish the movie. Meaning that an entirely new crew will take over the film's production, including a new director, cinematographer, etc., and they'll just finish up the movie however they like.

Waxwork was going over budget, and the bond company came in and told the production they had a single, 13-hour shooting day to complete this final battle sequence, which was by far the biggest, most elaborate piece of the entire thing.

To give you an idea of what that meant, a typical movie might do 20 or so setups (term for putting together the actors, sets, lighting, effects, etc. for a shot) a day, and a sitcom with pretty standard sets and lighting and so on might get 35 or 40 done in a day. *Waxwork* had to do something like 80 setups in one day, and those were action sequences with special effects and costumes, crowd scenes, the (wax)works, if you will.

They filmed about 4 times as much movie as is reasonable in a single day, and it shows in the best possible way.

Waxwork is a little sleepy during most of its run, but if you make it to the end, you'll see [one of the wildest sequences ever committed to film.](#)

House of Wax

We can't talk about this movie without talking about Paris Hilton.

Which is a little weird because the cast is rounded out by Chad Michael Murray, Jared Padalecki, Elisha Cuthbert, and MY MAN DAMON HERRIMAN, DEWEY CROWE HIMSELF!

So many stars were in this movie, the skies were dark for weeks! So what's with the casting of a celebrity not known for her acting?

Well...the rumor is that Hilton was the first role cast in the film, and she was the third choice after

Kate Winslet and Jennifer Connelly.

Let's start here: I suppose you can ASK Kate Winslet, who'd been nominated for the Best Actress Academy Award twice in the previous 7 years, Best Supporting Actress twice as well, to be in your horror movie. Of course, you're free to REQUEST Jennifer Connelly, who spent the last 10 years working on movies like *Requiem for a Dream* and *A Beautiful Mind*, be in your movie.

You can ASK whoever you want to play the 4th or 5th tier character in your movie, right? Here, watch this: I'm asking Kate Winslet to star in an HPLD video we're shooting to promote our Book a Librarian service. How about it? If you have leftover cardigans from your role in Steve Jobs, that'd be about perfect.

Now, when I go to cast library staff in the movie, I'll say, "We've got a request out to Kate Winslet."



My suspicion is that Paris Hilton was cast because the producers of this movie knew it needed something, an extra push, a way to get people talking about it. Because it's otherwise kind of a bumbling movie.

For starters, it has an overcomplicated "which twin is the evil one" subplot that doesn't matter because WELL before the end of the movie, BOTH twins are evil. One was apparently born evil, the other came to evil a little later in life, but by the time we meet them in the movie, both have been killing hapless teens for several years, maybe even decades, and I don't know how important it is that one of the twins was born a monster and the other was a bit of a late bloomer.

The other very weird thing is that the filmmakers REALLY blew the reveal that the wax figures in the titular *House of Wax* were not really statues, but people who had been covered in wax!

Here's how it goes in the movie: Elisha Cuthbert and Jared Padalecki go into the house because, at this point, it's a sensible thing to do. They are separated, and you, the viewer, see Padalecki abducted, taken to the basement, and put into a machine that covers him in wax, sort of like a tanning booth but instead of spraying a flattering tan, it sprays hot wax.

THEN, Cuthbert discovers what we already know, that Dean/Sam, depending on your Padalecki era, has been waxed. Cue Scooby-Doo chase music (or, in this case...let's go with Prodigy).

Here's how they SHOULD have managed this:

The pair is separated, and we, the viewers, follow Cuthbert. As she goes off and does whatever it is she's doing in the house, she then comes back and notices a statue seated at the piano that looks suspiciously like Padalecki. She sits next to it on the piano bench or examines it or whatever, and then realizes it's his REAL CORPSE.

THAT is a reveal!

When you show us the whole process of making the waxified corpses, it takes the punch out of the reveal.

This is why I think Hilton was cast: Because the movie is kind of a hot, melty, waxy mess, and I could totally see the producers being like, "We need to reveal the killer way earlier" and "Can we throw in a twist with twins or something," and "How about a stunt cast?"

I ALSO suspect this casting came later because if you're casting Paris Hilton in a movie about people who get turned into wax statues, wouldn't you absolutely, 100% have her turned into a wax statue? As a beauty and style icon of the time, as well as being an inexperienced actor, being turned into a wax statue as soon as possible was the role she was born to play! It's like casting Arnold as a super-intimidating killer robot who barely speaks.

Or, you know, you could just have her killed in the woods and put her body in the back of a pickup truck. You do you, *House of Wax*.

Hilton's casting was also interesting because it seems the producers and Hilton herself sort of embraced the public perception of Hilton. The tagline "On May 6th, See Paris Die" ended up replacing the movie's original tagline, and

Hilton sold a line of t-shirts with the slogan printed on them.

I don't know that I've ever seen a horror movie marketed on the fact that one of the non-antagonist characters dies, a minor spoiler. I don't even really know what to call it. Anti-Marketing? Death Marketing?

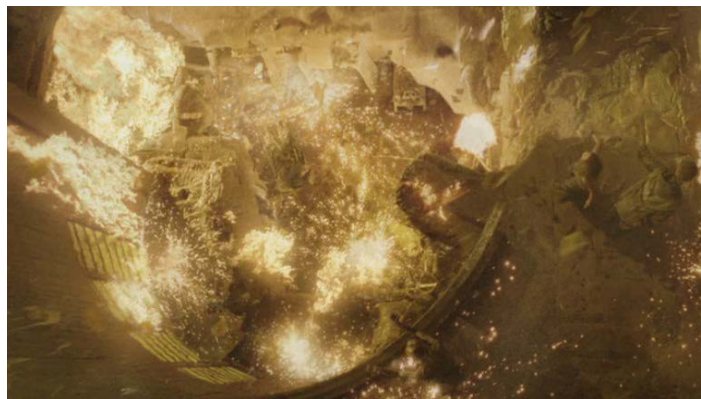
I suppose some may see it as cruel or hateful, and I can understand that

perspective. But I see it differently. I think this is a pretty early acknowledgement of the line that horror movies walk. Because when someone goes to see *Friday the 13th*, they are not necessarily rooting for the survival of the camp counselors, with the possible exception of the final girl. They are rooting for the mayhem in the form of Jason, and they are interested to see the death sequences.

In a weird way, the villains of some franchises become a sort of hero.

You get the same thing in *Alien Versus Predator* when the Predator teams up with a human woman in order to fight the xenomorphs for some reason, essentially warping the Predator into the movie's good guy sidekick. You can also see this in the *Jurassic World* movies when the fearsome T-Rex becomes a hero character. And in the recent *Saw* movie where Jigsaw basically becomes a scambuster. And, in a more thoughtful way, the 2021 *Candyman* movie where Candyman becomes a spirit of justifiable revenge as opposed to a ghoul assaulting children in a public bathroom.

Horror movies always struggle with the idea that their main characters are not the final girls or folks who ultimately defeat the monster, but the monsters



themselves.

Sometimes, when handled badly, the result is that the monster fundamentally changes and becomes the hero.

But sometimes, when the filmmakers understand this dynamic and leans into it without trying to change it, it can work.

All these things aside, what unites *Waxwork* and *House of Wax* is that the last 15 minutes or so of both is bonkers.

In *House of Wax*, the final confrontation takes place in the House of Wax, which is made ENTIRELY of wax, and, whoops, starts burning/melting.

It's kind of awesome to [see this giant house melting down into a molten puddle](#), and there's a pretty nice mix of practical effects going on. Again, it's a movie that is kind of boring and by-the-numbers up to this point, but the last 15 minutes are worth it. Eh, almost worth it.

And then we roll credits to My Chemical Romance's "Helena," which is both totally inappropriate and the only logical choice. This is the point at which I stood up and clapped.



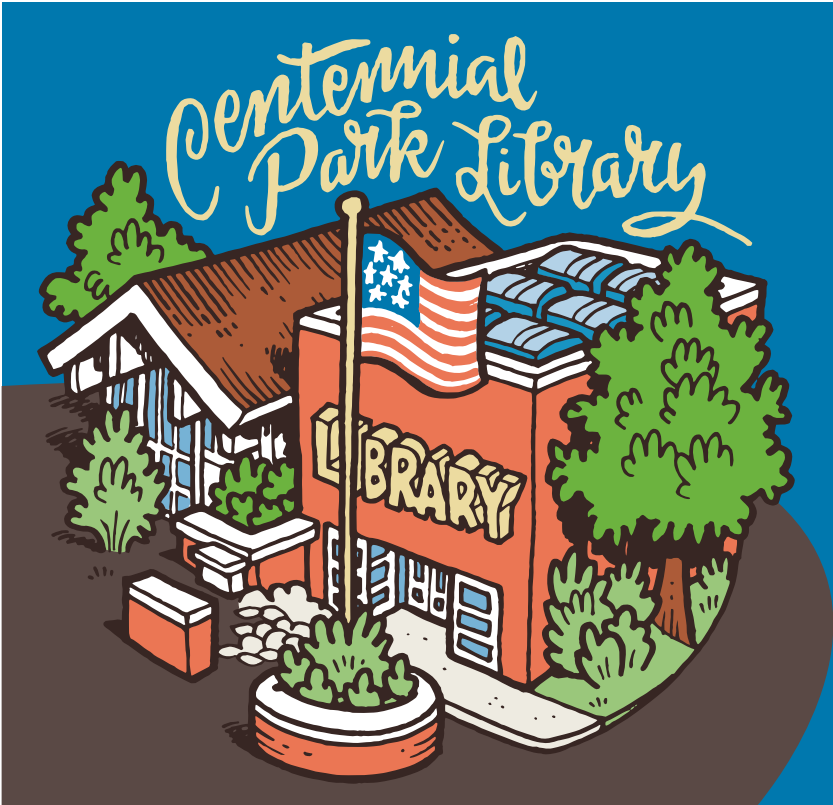
Wax-Up

I wanted to wrap this part up with the best, most exciting stuff so that the article paralleled the way the movies work, but how can I hope to compare to the greatness that is the end of a wax-based movie?

However, I do have one more trick up my sleeve, along with a bunch of cleverly-concealed Scrabble tiles in a pouch I sewed myself:

If you want to get in on the waxy action, sure, you could watch *Waxwork* or *House of Wax*, OR you could [buy this full-sized wax dummy on eBay](#) for just under \$5,000 bucks.

I HAVE to assume the horror punch of these Waxquels is greatly increased if this fellow is hanging around your house at night.



Remodel Re-Grand Opening

March 2024!



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