

## International films (continued from pg. 1)

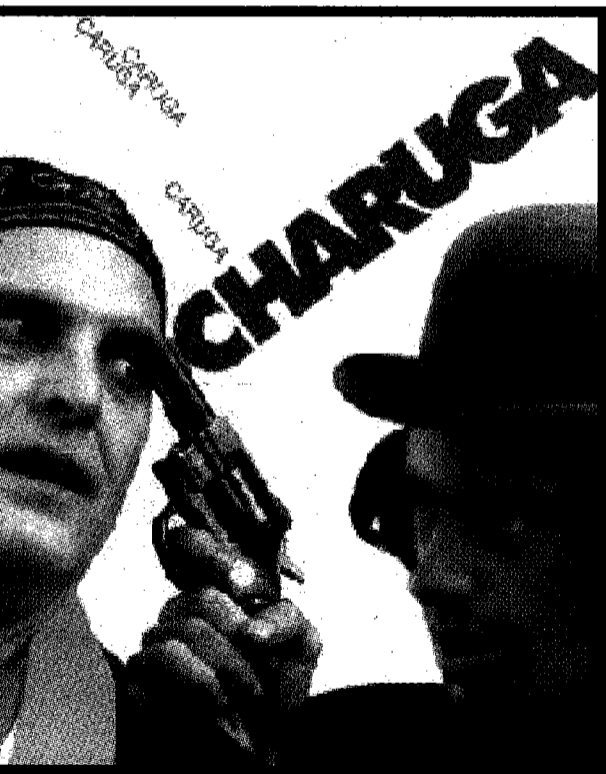
The best art transcends itself. It goes beyond mere entertainment to create a bold mixture of ideas and values to inform and engage its audience. The five films mentioned here are important for all these reasons and more. They all share a common characteristic in that each film pushes for a change in society, whether it is their own culture or the global society we all live in.

Each film in this list is powerful not only in its contents and ideas, but for the production and cinematography as well. Most were made during social upheaval in their country of origin and each film shines a light on the current problems and issues facing our society.

They give the viewer a perspective on a subject that might not be fully understood or appreciated. For this reason, some of these films have only recently been accepted in the pantheon of great films, after facing harsh criticism and banishment upon their release.

These films present an opportunity to realize the complex nature of human conflict. Whether it be an insurgency in Algeria in the 1950s or Iraq in 2006, seeing these conflicts from all angles allows for a greater understanding of current world events and conflicts.

In a global community, the need for students to understand different cultures, ideologies and customs is not only helpful, but necessary.



## Charuga

**English Title:** Charuga

**Released:** 1991

**Country of Origin:** Yugoslavia

**Language:** Serbo-Croatian

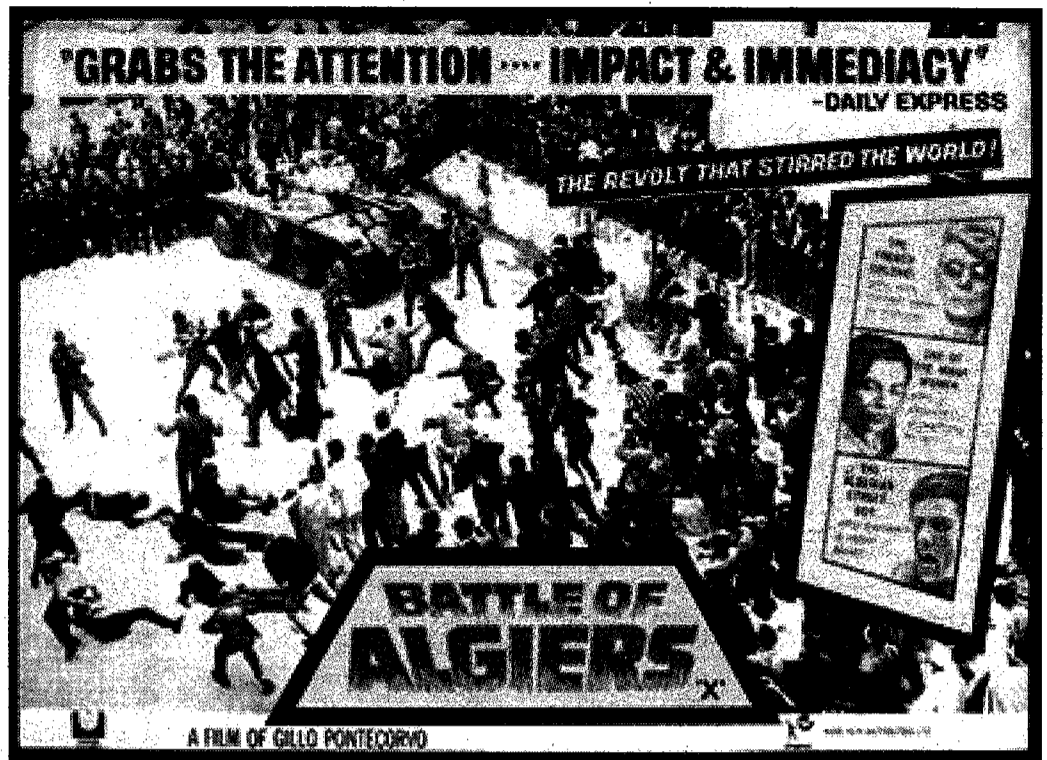
**Director:** Rajko Grlic

**Available:** Scarecrow Video or speciality DVD/Video stores.

This film is based on the exploits of Charuga, a legendary bandit in post-WWI Slavonia, a region of present-day Croatia. Charuga exemplifies the contradictions of many revolutionaries and revolutionary movements. The film's characters are neither wholly good nor evil, but rather a mixture of both.

Charuga leads a group of Marxist outlaws who steal from local landlords and give their spoils to the poor. Their hope is to change society in order to reflect the current mood of Eastern Europe in wake of the October Revolution in Moscow. However, Charuga is no Robin Hood. This film takes a more realistic look at the struggle for equality in a divided nation.

Filmed at the beginning of the breakup of Yugoslavia and the resulting war, it has been described by some as the "last truly Yugoslav film."



## La Battaglia di Algeri

**English Title:** The Battle of Algiers

**Released:** 1965 (released on DVD in 2004)

**Country of Origin:** Italy/Algeria

**Language:** French/Arabic/English

**Director:** Gillo Pontecorvo

**Awards:** Nominated for three Oscars (Best Director, Best Writing and Best Foreign Film)

**Available:** All major DVD/video stores

The Battle of Algiers focuses on the violent insurgency in Algeria during the 1950s. It was banned by the French government from 1965 until 1971 because the government saw the film as promoting terrorism. Rather the film takes a humanistic approach to showing why these acts were committed.

The film looks equally at both sides of the conflict, showing the struggles and difficulties faced by Algerians and the violent effects terrorism has on innocent civilians, both French and Algerian.

The relevancy of this film cannot be understated. The causes behind the insurgency in Iraq are similar to the motives portrayed. This film is a moving and artistic look at the struggle for independence and the way this struggle manifests itself.



## Soy Cuba

**English Title:** I am Cuba

**Released:** 1964 (released on DVD in 2000)

**Country of Origin:** Cuba (Financed by the U.S.S.R.)

**Language:** Spanish/Russian

**Director:** Mikhail Kalatozov

**Awards:** Archival Award by the National Society of Film Critics, USA (1996)

**Available:** All major DVD/video stores

Soy Cuba provides a view on the Cuban revolution of 1957 from the perspective of the general populace. It explores four different storylines, portraying Cuban dancers, fruit vendors and farmers amidst a backdrop of deplorable working conditions and political repression.

The film tries to explain why the population rose en masse to topple the pro-American Batista administration and install Fidel Castro as the head of Cuba's new communist government.

Unabashedly pro-Communist, the film was financed in large part by the Soviet Union. That withstanding, the real revolutionary aspect of the film is not the ideas it espouses, but rather its original and dynamic cinematography. The fluid and majestic way each scene is captured allows for a greater understanding of the content of the film.

## Moy Svodnyy brat Frankensteyn

**English Title:** My Step-Brother Frankenstein

**Released:** 2004

**Country of Origin:** Russia

**Language:** Russian

**Director:** Valeri Todorovsky

**Awards:** FIPRESCI Prize at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (Czech Republic) and the Russian Film Clubs' Federation Award at the Moscow International Film Festival.

**Available:** Pending U.S. release or through online retailers.

This film gives a dark and disturbing look at the personal effects of war on a soldier. Upon returning from the conflict in Chechnya, a soldier is reunited with his family. While their reactions differ, they all must come to terms with the physical and emotional scars of war. This is a moving film which shows the long-term effects of war outside of the immediate battleground. The film is relevant in the current context of the Iraq conflict and displays an intimate look at a family's struggle with the cost of war.



## Diarios de Motocicleta

**English Title:** Motorcycle Diaries

**Released:** 2004

**Country of Origin:** Brazil

**Language:** Spanish/Quecha

**Director:** Walter Salles

**Awards:** 24 major awards including Best Achievement in Music (Academy Awards) and Best Foreign Language Film (Golden Globe).

**Available:** All major DVD/video stores

Walter Salles adapts the diaries of Che Guevara into a moving and emotional tale about two men searching for social justice and change in a society they see as corrupt and unequal. The movie portrays Guevara as a multi-dimensional character, far removed from his face on the posters and t-shirts that have become commonplace in the United States.

The film focuses on the travels undertaken of Guevara (Gael Garcia Bernal) and Alberto Granado (Rodrigo del la Serna) in the 1950s in which they travel through South America. The journey exposes viewers to the inequalities and injustice many people faced (and still face) in South America.