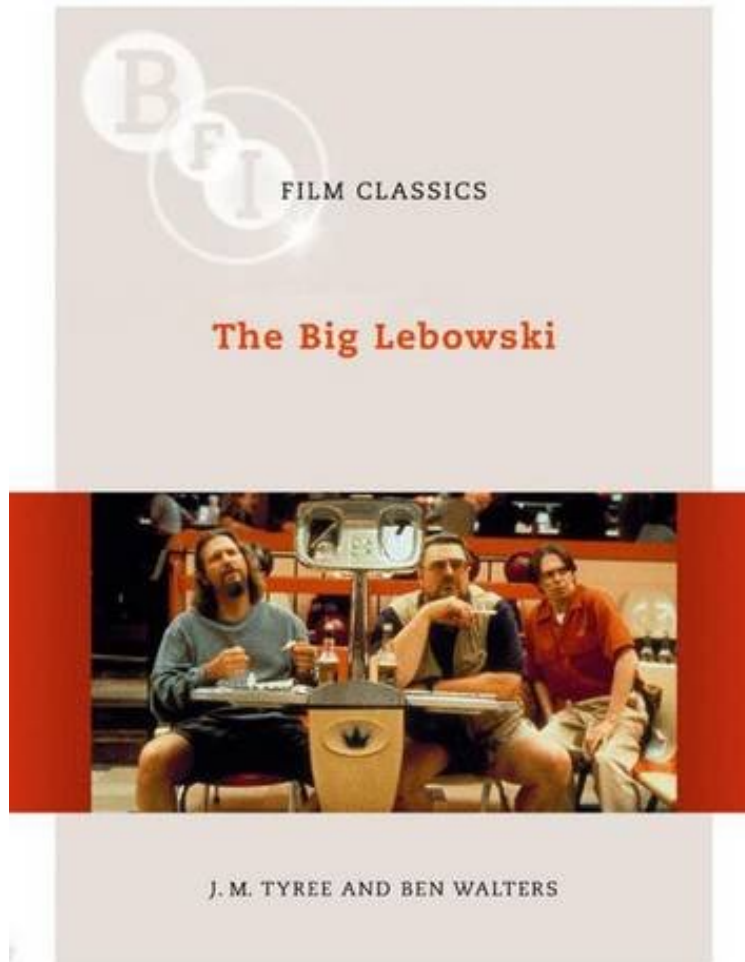


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## The Big Lebowski (BFI Film Classics)

*J.M. Tyree, Ben Walters*

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**J.M. Tyree, Ben Walters : The Big Lebowski (BFI Film Classics)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Big Lebowski (BFI Film Classics):

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful. "Sometimes there's a man..."By Dash ManchetteSometimes there's a man who just fits in to his time and place. And of course, it is the Dude, the Little Lebowski, we are talking about here. Although it was a flop at the box office, The Big Lebowski is now deservedly a cult classic, with a following to match that of The Rocky Horror Picture Show. Just in my hometown of Cleveland recently there was a Lebowski bowl-a-thon preceding a midnight showing of the movie. It is not surprising then that the British Film Institute would publish one of its monographs on the movie. It is pretty good, too. THE BIG LEBOWSKI (and I am

talking about the book here) is broken down into four sections. The first explores the incongruities within the movie that make it a bit confusing the first time around. Such incongruities are both large (just how did a laid back dude from the '60s get to be such good friends with the uptight, everything-is-about-'Nam Walter?) and small (a picture of Richard Nixon in the Dude's apartment). Such juxtapositions are tied into the Coen brothers' overall catalogue and tied together for the reader, just like the Dude's rug (which got the whole story rolling) tied his room together. The second section looks at *The Big Lebowski* in the context of older film noir, including *The Big Sleep* based on the Raymond Chandler movie. As the authors point out, *The Big Lebowski* is also a crime movie, similar to though different from such classic noir. Despite its humor, *The Big Lebowski* is not merely a spoof. Nor is it an homage. Rather, it is a pastiche, with modern characters laid over the classic ones. The Dude is quite different from Philip Marlowe, Chandler's famous detective. Whereas Marlowe was smooth, the Dude has difficulty completing a sentence even when no one is interrupting him. Yet similarities are recognizable below the surface. The authors miss a bit in the third chapter, discussing the concept of masculinity in the movie as well as the Coen brothers' other works. A clumsy attempt to tie the movie into the presidency of Ronald Reagan comes off as more of an amateur's attempt to take a sucker punch at the former president. Further, underneath some otherwise good points, there is a slight undertone of misandry (hatred or belittlement of men), such as when the authors state that the Dude, rather than trying to be a man, can focus instead on being a human being. Just the nice type of false dichotomy used to denigrate a class of people while giving the persons making it some type of plausible deniability as to their doing so. This is especially noteworthy given that the character Maude Lebowski is basically begging for such an analysis herself. Self important, arrogant, clear issues with men, patronizing attitude towards those she thinks are not as smart as herself (which is almost everyone), with not the slightest insight into her own personality defects, she is a walking bullseye of the gender theories of feminists. Yet the authors do not touch this. No doubt criticizing women, let alone feminists, does not win one accolades in the academy or the media, where our two authors live their lives. Denigrating men is so much better for the career and the ego. The book wraps up with a chapter on laughter and what the important things in life really are. Bowling plays such a large part in the movie because it is a place where people can go, be themselves and have a good time. The Coen brothers often have movies with characters who enjoy their lives and characters who do not. This plays especially large in *The Big Lebowski*, with the laid back Dude on one side and the nihilists and the Big Jeffrey Lebowski himself on the other. Overall, *THE BIG LEBOWSKI* is a solid contribution to the BFI series. It is especially so for any fan of the movie. Any political missteps by the authors are not serious enough to detract from the larger analysis provided. Add it to your collection. Then go bowling.

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A splendid introduction to one of the great films of the past two decades  
By Robert Moore  
I saw *THE BIG LEBOWSKI* when it first came out and thought it one of the best comedies that I had seen in ages. The past decade plus of one of the weakest periods in American comic film makes you appreciate the Coen Brothers' masterpiece more than ever. Most comic films today seem to imitate Jud Apatow's brainless output, where comedy seems to consist of bad sex jokes, ceaseless profanity, and perpetual laughing at others' embarrassment. Tyree and Walters's book provides a perfect introduction to *THE BIG LEBOWSKI*, detailing many of the major themes in the film, its sources as a semi-parody of Howard Hawks's film version of Raymond Chandler's *THE BIG SLEEP* in particular and film noir in general. I'd seen the film 6 or 7 times prior to reading this, but I learned a lot more about it from reading this than I expected. Another great book in a consistently good series about great films.

10 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Overall quite good  
By tallguy  
Overall, this is quite a nice book. If you are at least a casual fan of the movie (i.e., have seen it more than twice) you will probably enjoy it. If you are an avid fan of the movie you MUST read it. The authors make several great observations of the film's props, dialogue, double entendres, et al. that even an avid fan surely missed, even after multiple viewings. They also make a lot of interesting comparisons of *The Big Lebowski* to film history (including past Coen Brothers' films). The text is ripe with full-frame stills from this film and those that it is compared to. At times the prose can be a bit verbose (e.g., the comparison to Philip Marlowe) and lofty, but that's to be expected from this series of books. Let's put it this way: you're on reading a review of a book about a specific movie. You've come this far for a reason. Buy it and read it. You'll love it...

Since its release, "*The Big Lebowski*" has become a classic. This study sets the movie into the context of 1990s Hollywood cinema, anatomised for its relationship with the classics which it satirises, and discussed in terms of its key theme: the hopeless flailing of ridiculously unmanly men in the world of put-on identities that is Los Angeles.

"Terrific stuff, intellectually engaging, visually appealing, and shot through with wit and insight." -Time Out London  
"Beautifully lucid." -Little White Lies  
"Compact and deliciously readable." -Offscreen.com  
"Is it an important book? That depends. Do you think *The Big Lebowski* is an important film? If the answer is an unhesitating 'yes,' run, don't walk." -January magazine ...very quotable...[with] many colourful characters...'  
Filmwerk  
About the Author  
J. M. Tyree is an associate editor of *New England* and the author of *BFI Film Classics: Salesman*. Ben Walters is the author of books on Orson Welles and *The Office*. They contributed to *Sight Sound* magazine's Greatest Films Poll 2012, have spoken together at BFI's National Film Theatre, and have coauthored reviews for *Sight Sound* on *No Country for Old*

Men, Burn After Reading, and Inside Lewyn Davis.