

## Inductees superb to just OK

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FROM SACRAMENTO

It's now the holiday season, so let's start this by being positive: Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Maria Shriver got it exactly right when they named filmmaker George Lucas to their California Hall of Fame.



The writer-director-producer is best known for his "Star Wars" and "Indiana Jones" blockbusters. But for me, a fellow California native, Lucas' most remarkable and entertaining contribution was his breakthrough 1973 hit "American Graffiti."

Here's a creative role model who grew up in small-town Modesto in the Central Valley — cruisin', draggin', listening to Wolfman Jack — and captured his and millions of California teens' night lives in a semi-autobiographical, iconic flick. Lucas set the story in 1962 Modesto, when he was 18.

The low-budget film became one of the most profitable ever and made Lucas a multimillionaire before age 30.

It capsulized the music and culture of a generation.

"Hey, hey, hey, baby. What do you say?"

"Paradise Road."

"Jesus, what a night!"

So it's inconceivable that anyone could argue against Lucas' selection by the state's First Couple to join the California Hall of Fame. That's not true with everyone selected, however.

And that has been the case ever since Shriver created the hall in 2006 to help revive the all-but-ignored state history museum two blocks from the Capitol. It seems to have worked. Attendance is way up and, if nothing else, the privately funded museum is a destination for school tours.

The fourth batch of 13 hall of famers will be inducted there Tuesday night in a sort of Hollywood mock-up ceremony featuring a red carpet strung alongside some light-rail tracks. It's bound to be cold and damp. Very un-Hollywood, except for the stars.

Besides Lucas, 65, the other new living members are: entertainer Carol Burnett, 76; former Intel chief executive Andrew Grove, 73; decathlon champ Rafer Johnson, 74; football coach and commenta-



CRAIG RUTTLE/Bloomberg

**DESERVING:** Writer-director-producer George Lucas is among 13 to be inducted into the California Hall of Fame.

tor John Madden, 73; novelist Danielle Steel, 62; bodybuilder Joe Weider, 90, and test pilot Chuck Yeager, 86.

There will be five post-humous inductees: reform Gov. Hiram Johnson, industrialist Henry J. Kaiser, philanthropist Joan Kroc, slain gay-rights activist Harvey Milk and Native American artist Fritz Scholder.

There'll be a yearlong museum display for each member, including the likes of Burnett's tap shoes, Rafer Johnson's Olympic gold medal, Madden's 1977 Super Bowl trophy, several Scholder paintings, Steel's typewriter, Yeager's flight jacket and Lucas' "Star Wars" droids. Too bad there won't be a miniature of the blond's white T-bird from "Graffiti."

It's about time that Gov. Johnson and Kaiser got recognized. If it weren't for Johnson's conquering the special interests a century ago and creating direct democracy — specifically, the recall — Schwarzenegger might not have ever been elected governor. Kaiser built 1,490 ships during World War II, better than one ship a day, and pioneered HMOs.

(For a complete list of past inductees, go to the website [californiamuseum.org](http://californiamuseum.org).)

Once you realize that this is not a true hall of fame — in the traditional sense of extolling only the all-time greatest — the selections become easier to accept. Just consider it an honor roll of Schwarzenegger's

and Shriver's favorites.

There is an advisory board, but rank has its privilege.

Schwarzenegger is the only reason Weider made the list. Weider was Schwarzenegger's ticket to America. Brought him to California to compete in bodybuilding contests. Mentored him into a world champ. Was his financial patron, trainer and inspiration. They're very close.

Other hall selectees range from OK to excellent.

There was heated discussion on the board about romance writer Steel, whose prolific works might be dismissed as trashy novels.

"This should not be an elitist institution," says Daniel Zingale, a former Shriver chief of staff who is on the board and argued for Steel. "This is not the hall of literary stature. It's about fame. She's one of the most read authors in the world."

Virtually every airport book rack in the English-reading world contains a Steel paperback. She has written 108 books, sold 500 million copies and set a world record for remaining on the bestseller list for 381 straight weeks. She lives in San Francisco and Paris.

OK, but what about Joan Didion, an unexcelled chronicler of California's soul? She grew up in pre-air-conditioned Sacramento, a place so hot in the summertime, she wrote, that "August comes on not like a month, but an affliction."

Why doesn't she qualify for California's Hall of Fame? Didion has been invited, but she's apparently too frail, at 74, to fly from her New York home to Sacramento for the red-carpet ritual. And for Shriver, that's the price of admission to the hall.

Only one inductee has never showed up: actress Elizabeth Taylor two years ago. She committed, then called at the last moment with back pain. Good for her. Pain's pain. But it irked Shriver and the board.

That's insensitive and discriminatory. It's saying only the physically fit are worthy of being honored. The frail will have to wait until they're dead. But it would be nice to recognize them while they can appreciate it.

After four rounds of selections, there are some deceased who are conspicuous by their absence:

Gov. Pat Brown, the great builder. Baseball immortal Joe DiMaggio, whose family name is synonymous with San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf. Joe's beloved wife, actress Marilyn Monroe, who bounced around L.A. foster homes before being "discovered" by Hollywood. Amadeo Peter Giannini, who founded Bank of America, lent to the working class and bankrolled the movie industry.

Want live? I'll nominate former UCLA basketball coach John Wooden, arguably the greatest coach ever of any sport. His Bruins won 10 NCAA titles in 12 years. But he's 99 and probably wouldn't crawl to Sacramento either.

Some Beach Boys are still active. They created the quintessential Southern California sound: "Surfin' U.S.A." "Fun, Fun, Fun."

They definitely belong in the hall, even if hot podder John Milner did declare in "Graffiti": "I don't like that surfin' [stuff]. Rock 'n' roll's been going down hill ever since Buddy Holly died."

Nonsense. That was just Modesto envy.

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