

## **Funny Films and TV Shows for Funeral Planning**

Compiled by Gail Rubin, [www.AGoodGoodbye.com](http://www.AGoodGoodbye.com)

*Bernie* (2011, PG-13) Stars Jack Black, Shirley MacLaine, Matthew McConaughey  
Based on a true story of a funeral director who takes up with a wealthy widow in a small East Texas town. Provides insights on the funeral business.

*The Big Chill* (1983, R) Stars Kevin Kline, Glenn Close, William Hurt and many more!  
A group of college friends gather for a weekend reunion after a funeral for one of their own. Offers lessons on music at funerals and grief over suicide.

*Big Fish* (2003, PG-13) Stars Ewan McGregor, Albert Finney, Billy Crudup  
A son tries to learn more about his dying father by reliving stories and myths he told about his life. Provides a great lesson on the importance of funerals and storytelling.

*The Big Lebowski* (1998, R) Stars Jeff Bridges and John Goodman  
This cult classic comedy has really bad language, but also two funny scenes with great lessons about cremation, eulogies and ash scattering.

*Death at a Funeral* (US version 2010, R or UK version 2007, R)  
These variations on the same story feature a home funeral ceremony that turns into a debacle of exposed family secrets and misplaced bodies. One instructive scene shows two brothers standing at their father's casket and discussing how they will pay for the funeral.

*Elizabethtown* (2005, PG-13) Stars Orlando Bloom, Kirsten Dunst, Susan Sarandon  
This romantic comedy set in Elizabethtown, Kentucky illuminates a clash of cultures within one family regarding burial versus cremation.

*Get Low* (2009, PG-13) Stars Robert Duvall, Bill Murray, Sissy Spacek  
Based on a true story of a Depression-era man who threw himself a "funeral party" while he was still alive to hear what people would say about him. The film is instructive for funeral event planning elements and the idea of holding a living memorial service.

*Harold and Maude* (1971, No Rating) Stars Ruth Gordon and Bud Cort  
Young, rich, and obsessed with death, Harold finds himself changed forever when he meets lively septuagenarian Maude at a funeral. Maude's life philosophy is instructive for us all.

*The Loved One* (1965, No Rating) Stars include Robert Morse, Liberace, Rod Steiger  
This satire of the funeral business followed Jessica Mitford's industry-shaking book *The American Way of Death*. It's a great film to discuss funeral consumer issues and pet loss.

*The Six Wives of Henry Lefay* – (2009, R) Stars include Tim Allen and Elisha Cuthbert  
This comedic cautionary tale for those who don't make funeral plans (or those who make plans but get married way too many times) details vital choices to make.

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*Undertaking Betty* (2002, PG-13) Stars Brenda Blethyn, Alfred Molina, Christopher Walken  
A woman whose husband is cheating on her and an undertaker who has been in love with her since their childhood decide to fake her death so they can be together. The competing funeral director in town creates flamboyant, personalized funerals.

*Waking Ned Devine* (1998, PG) Stars Ian Bannen and David Kelly  
After bachelor Ned Devine dies from the shock of winning the lottery, two friends in a small, remote Irish village plot to collect the winnings. There's a great scene about being present at one's own funeral and hearing what people would say about you.

### **International Films**

*Chaos & Cadavers* (2003, No Rating) This British film features a newlywed couple honeymooning at a remote manor house that's also hosting a convention of funeral directors. The groom is afraid of death and actually uses the word "thanatophobic."

*Departures* (2008, PG-13) Japanese film that focuses on a newly unemployed cellist who takes a job preparing the dead for funerals. It is instructive for scenes featuring cremation and Japanese Buddhist funeral traditions.

*Nora's Will* (2008, No Rating) This comedic drama from Mexico begins with Jose finding out that Nora, the woman he'd been married to for 30 years and then divorced, has committed suicide. The film provides insights into Jewish funeral and burial traditions.

*My Mexican Shiva* (2007) This Mexican comedy also provides insights into Jewish funeral and mourning rituals, featuring some very traditional observances. A wacky collection of family and friends come together for the seven-day mourning period after the patriarch's sudden, unexpected death.

### **TV Shows**

*Six Feet Under* – HBO series from 2000 to 2005 examines many aspects of grief and the funeral business with drama, humor and sympathy.

*The Mary Tyler Moore Show* – "Chuckles Bites the Dust" is a hysterical episode from 1976 that brings laughter and insights to the topic of death and funerals.

Other film suggestions are listed at <http://AGoodGoodbye.com/funeral-films/>

Got other film or TV show suggestions? Please share! Contact Gail Rubin at 505-265-7215 or email [Gail@AGoodGoodbye.com](mailto:Gail@AGoodGoodbye.com).