

# Groundhog Day (1993)

## TOMATOMETER

### All critics

96%

Average Rating: 8/10  
Reviews Counted: 71  
Fresh: 68  
Rotten: 3

### Top critics

100%

Average Rating: 7.8/10  
Reviews Counted: 17  
Fresh: 17  
Rotten: 0

Critics Consensus: Smart, sweet, and inventive, *Groundhog Day* highlights Murray's dramatic gifts while still leaving plenty of room for laughs.

## AUDIENCE SCORE

87%

liked it  
Average Rating: 3.4/5  
User Ratings: 414,600

## Movie Info

Bill Murray plays Phil, a TV weatherman working for a local station in Pennsylvania but convinced that national news stardom is in his grasp. Phil displays a charm and wit on camera that evaporates the moment the red light goes off; he is bitter, appallingly self-centered, and treats his co-workers with

contempt, especially his producer Rita (Andie MacDowell) and cameraman Larry (Chris Elliot). On February 2, 1992, Phil, Rita, and Larry are sent on an assignment that Phil especially loathes: the annual Groundhog Day festivities in Punxsutawney, PA, where the citizens await the appearance of Punxsutawney Phil, the groundhog who will supposedly determine the length of winter by his ability to see his own shadow. Phil is eager to beat a hasty retreat, but when a freak snowstorm strands him in Punxsutawney, he wakes up the next morning with the strangest sense of déjà vu: he seems to be living the same day over again. The next morning it happens again, and then again. Soon, no matter what he does, he's stuck in February 2, 1992; not imprisonment nor attempted suicide nor kidnapping the groundhog gets him out of the loop. But the more Phil relives the same day, the more he's forced to look at other people's lives, and something unusual happens: he begins to care about others. He starts to respect people, he tries to save the life of a homeless man, and he discovers that he's falling in love with Rita and therefore wants to be someone that she could love in return. ~ Mark Deming, Rovi

Rating: PG (for some thematic elements)  
Genre: Comedy, Science Fiction & Fantasy, Special Interest, Romance  
Directed by: Harold Ramis  
Written by: Danny Rubin, Harold Ramis  
In Theaters: Feb 12, 1993 wide  
On DVD: Jan 29, 2002  
Runtime: 102 minutes  
Studio: Columbia Pictures  
[[www.rottentomatoes.com](http://www.rottentomatoes.com)]



Theatrical release poster (Wikipedia)

# Groundhog Day (film)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

***Groundhog Day*** is a 1993 American fantasy-comedy film directed by Harold Ramis, starring Bill Murray, Andie MacDowell, and Chris Elliott. It was written by Ramis and Danny Rubin, based on a story by Rubin.

Murray plays Phil Connors, an arrogant Pittsburgh TV weatherman who, during an assignment covering the annual Groundhog Day event in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, finds himself in a time loop, repeating the same day again and again. After indulging in hedonism and committing suicide numerous times, he begins to re-examine his life and priorities.

In 2006, the film was added to the United States National Film Registry as being deemed "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant". A stage musical version of the film premiered in 2016.

## Plot

During his nightly TV weather forecast on February 1, meteorologist Phil Connors (Bill Murray) confidently reassures Pittsburgh viewers that an approaching winter storm will miss western Pennsylvania completely. He then sets off with news producer Rita Hanson (Andie MacDowell) and cameraman Larry (Chris Elliott) for Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania to cover the next morning's Groundhog Day festivities. Phil makes no secret of his contempt for the assignment, the small town, and the "hicks" who live there.

On February 2, Phil awakens at his Punxsutawney bed & breakfast to Sonny & Cher's "I Got You Babe" on the clock radio and the declaration, "It's Groundhog Day!" He tapes a half-hearted report on Punxsutawney Phil and the town's festivities. Rita wants to stay and cover some of the other events, but Phil wants to return to Pittsburgh immediately. The blizzard—the one that Phil predicted would miss the area—resolves the issue by blanketing the region in snow, stranding them in Punxsutawney.

The next morning, Phil awakens once again to "I Got You Babe", and the same "It's Groundhog

Day!" announcement. Strangely, there is no snow on the ground; and the day's events repeat exactly as the day before, to the smallest detail. The following day is another identical repetition; Phil is trapped in a time loop, repeating Groundhog Day over and over. No matter how he varies his routine, trying to break the loop, he awakens every morning to "I Got You Babe" and yet another rerun of Groundhog Day. With no obvious way out—and apparently nothing to lose—he passes the endless, identical days with drunken binges, reckless driving adventures, and one-night stands. He also finds himself increasingly attracted to Rita, but she rejects all of his various seduction schemes.

As Phil sinks into a progressively deeper depression, his morning report becomes increasingly cynical and sarcastic ("this is one time where television really fails to capture the true excitement of a large squirrel predicting the weather"), until one day he snaps. He drives off with Punxsutawney Phil, leading police on a wild vehicle chase ("Don't drive angry!" he advises Phil) before plunging to his death off a high overlook—only to awaken yet again on Groundhog Day morning, listening to "I Got You Babe". More suicide attempts, using every method he can imagine, end in exactly the same way. In desperation, Phil confides in Rita, telling her the whole story, and convincing her by correctly predicting each trivial incident as it is about to occur. After a happy day together, they fall asleep in Phil's bed; but Phil, to his dismay, awakens alone yet again to the strains of "I Got You Babe", still trapped in the time loop.

At last, Phil realizes that the interminable daily repetition, and his intimate knowledge of every detail of the day's events, can be put to constructive use. He learns to play the piano, sculpt ice, and speak French (or another language in some foreign-language versions) from local instructors. His report of the Groundhog Day celebration becomes so eloquent that all the other reporters turn their microphones to him. After a lifetime of self-absorption, he begins addressing the needs of others. When a homeless man dies despite his best efforts to save him, he begins averting disasters that he stood by and watched many times before. He befriends the townspeople he once shunned and, with the benefit of his unique hindsight, helps some of them through personal crises and steers others toward better decisions.

Rita notices his seemingly "overnight" transformation, and is impressed. That evening at the town's Groundhog Day dinner-dance, she "wins" Phil with the high bid at the charity bachelor auction. Phil makes a beautiful snow sculpture of Rita's face, and tells her that no matter what happens, even if he is doomed to continue awakening alone each morning forever, he wants her to know that he is finally happy, because he loves her.

In the morning, "I Got You Babe" is playing on the radio—but the snow is still on the ground, and Rita is still beside him. At last, it is February 3! After Phil explains to Rita why he fell asleep on her the previous night ("It was the end of a very long day"), they walk hand in hand through the peaceful, snow-covered town. "It's so beautiful," Phil says. "Let's live here!"

## Cast



Andie MacDowell with groundhog, 2008

- Bill Murray as Phil Connors
- Andie MacDowell as Rita Hanson
- Chris Elliott as Larry the camera man
- Stephen Tobolowsky as Ned Ryerson
- Brian Doyle-Murray as Buster Green
- Angela Paton as Mrs. Lancaster
- Rick Ducommun as Gus
- Rick Overton as Ralph
- Robin Duke as Doris the waitress
- Marita Geraghty as Nancy Taylor
- Harold Ramis as Neurologist
- Willie Garson as Phil's Asst. Kenny
- Ken Hudson Campbell as man in hallway
- Richard Henzel as D.J. #1
- Rob Riley as D.J. #2
- David Pasquesi as Psychiatrist
- Hynden Walch as Debbie the bride
- Michael Shannon as Fred the groom
- Eric Siefert as Buster's son

- Peggy Roeder as the piano teacher

## Production

Prior to Murray's casting, Tom Hanks and Michael Keaton turned down the lead role. In the original screenplay by Danny Rubin, the story line began mid-narrative with Phil already inexplicably trapped in the time loop, and ended with his suicide, only to awaken on the morning of February 2 once again. In that version, Rita eventually confessed to being trapped in a time loop of her own. Many critical script alterations were written as filming progressed, according to Stephen Tobolowsky, who played Ned Ryerson. "When I got the part, it was still kind of a mediocre Bill Murray movie," he said. "You know, Bill Murray, with no consequences, in comic situations ... It wasn't until we got into the shooting that everything turned on its head. And it became not only a good movie, not only a great movie, but a classic."

During filming, Ramis and Murray's longtime collaboration and friendship ended abruptly, without public explanation. Except for a few words at a wake, and later at a bar mitzvah, the two men did not speak for almost 20 years after the film's release. Murray finally initiated a reconciliation—at the suggestion of his brother—only after Ramis entered the final stages of his terminal illness.



Tip Top Bistro, established at the site of the fictional Tip Top Cafe in Woodstock

The film was shot in Woodstock, Illinois, 60 miles (97 kilometres) northwest of Chicago near the Wisconsin border, because Punxsutawney "didn't have a town center that looked good on camera", according to Ramis, and because Punxsutawney's remote location magnified the logistical problems and expense of filming there. Punxsutawney officials, miffed that their town had been passed over, refused to allow the real Punxsutawney Phil to appear in the

movie, but sent representatives to Woodstock to make sure the ceremony was being depicted accurately. (Punxsutawney's actual Groundhog Day celebration is held not in the town itself, but in a clearing atop a wooded hill called Gobbler's Knob, about 2 miles (3.2 kilometres) southeast of Punxsutawney.)



The "Cherry Street Inn", actually a private home at the time of filming, and actually on Fremont Street

Punxsutawney Phil was played by a series of groundhogs collectively known as Scooter. "[The animals] hated my guts from day one," said Murray, who was bitten twice during shooting, severely enough that he was forced to undergo precautionary rabies immunization afterward.

The Tip Top Cafe, where many indoor scenes took place, was a set created for the film; but it became an actual restaurant, the Tip Top Bistro, following the movie's success. Later, it became a coffee and Italian ice cream shop, and after that a fried chicken outlet. The Cherry Street Inn, the Queen Anne-Victorian bed & breakfast where Murray's character stayed, was a private home at the time of filming. Today, it is an actual bed & breakfast.

Since 1992, Woodstock has staged an annual Groundhog Day festival, featuring a dinner dance, free screenings of the movie, and a walking tour of the opera house, bowling alley, movie theatre, Moose Lodge (site of the dinner dance scene), piano teacher's house, Cherry Street Inn, and other locations from the film.

### Time loop duration speculations

Estimates regarding how long Phil supposedly remains trapped in the loop, in real time, vary widely. During filming, Ramis, who was a Buddhist, observed that according to Buddhist doctrine, it takes 10,000 years for a soul to evolve to its next level. Therefore, he said, in a spiritual sense, the entire arc of *Groundhog Day* spans 10,000 years. In the DVD commentary, Ramis estimated a real-time

duration of 10 years. Later, Ramis told a reporter, "I think the 10-year estimate is too short. It takes at least 10 years to get good at anything, and allotting for the down time and misguided years he spent, it had to be more like 30 or 40 years." In an interview with Rubin, conducted by Ryan Gilbey in 2003, Rubin says, »... Ultimately it became this weird political issue because if you asked the studio, 'How long was the repetition?', they'd say, 'Two weeks.' But the point of the movie to me was that you had to feel you were enduring something that was going on for a long time. It's not like a sitcom where the problem is solved after 22 1/2 minutes. For me it had to be – I don't know. A hundred years. A lifetime.« Gilbey writes, »Ramis maintains that the original script had specified that Phil was stuck for 10,000 years because of the significance of that time-span in Buddhist teaching, but Rubin denies this. 'Harold likes that allusion,' he says, 'And it's good for the legend of the film because of the Buddhist connection. However, that wasn't on my mind.' [Ryan Gilbey, "Groundhog Day", bfi Publishing, 2003] In 2014, the website WhatCulture combined various time duration assumptions and estimated that Phil spent a total of 12,395 days—just under 34 years—reliving Groundhog Day.

## Soundtrack

Soundtrack Available on Epic Soundtrack

- *Weatherman* (end title): Written by George Fenton and Harold Ramis. Produced by George Fenton. Performed by Delbert McClinton. Courtesy of Curb Records
- *Clouds* (score)
- *I Got You Babe*: Written by Sonny Bono. Performed by Sonny & Cher. Courtesy of ATCO Records by arrangement with Warner Special Products, and released as a promotional single with "Take Me Round Again" written by George Fenton, performed by Susie Stevens, as B-side.
- *Quartet No.1 in D - The Groundhog* (uncredited music): performed by Bruce Dukov, Sheldon Sanov, Pam Goldsmith, Dennis Karmayzn
- *Take Me Round Again* Written and produced by George Fenton. Performed by Susie Stevens
- *Drunks* (score)

- *Pennsylvania Polka*: Written by Lester Lee & Zeke Manners. Performed by Frankie Yankovic. Courtesy of Columbia Records by arrangement with Sony Music Licensing
- *You Like Boats But Not The Ocean* (score)
- *Phil Getz The Girl* (score)
- *Phil Steals The Money* (score)
- *You Don't Know Me*: Written by Eddy Arnold & Cindy Walker. Performed by Ottmar Liebert and Luna Negra (film version: Ray Charles)
- *The Kidnap And The Quarry* (score)
- *Sometimes People Just Die* (score)
- *Eighteenth Variation from Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*: Written by Sergei Rachmaninoff. Performed by Elizabeth Buccheri
- Medley: *Phil's Piano Solo / Eighteenth Variation from Rhapsodie on a Theme of Paganini*: Written, produced and performed by Terry Fryer
- *The Ice Sculpture* (score)
- *A New Day* (score)
- *Almost Like Being In Love*: Written by Alan Jay Lerner & Frederick Loewe. Performed by Nat King Cole. Courtesy of Capitol Records by arrangement with Cema Special Markets
- *La Bourée du clibataire* by Jacques Brel (not included on soundtrack album)

## Reception

The film was released to generally favorable reviews, holding a score of 72 out of 100 at Metacritic. Owen Gleiberman of *Entertainment Weekly* gave it a B– and Desson Howe of *The Washington Post* noted that even though the film is a good Bill Murray vehicle, "'Groundhog' will never be designated a national film treasure by the Library of Congress". Nonetheless, the film was selected by the National Film Preservation Board for preservation in the Library of Congress in 2006.

Among positive reviews, Janet Maslin of *The New York Times* called it "a particularly witty and resonant comedy" and Hal Hinson of *The Washington Post* called it "the best American comedy since 'Tootsie.'" It was a solid performer in its initial release, grossing \$70.9 million

in North America and ranking 13th among films released in 1993. It was nominated for the Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation, but lost to *Jurassic Park*.

*Groundhog Day* holds a 96% "Certified Fresh" rating on Rotten Tomatoes. The site's consensus reads "Smart, sweet, and inventive, *Groundhog Day* highlights Murray's dramatic gifts while still leaving plenty of room for laughs". The film is regarded as a contemporary classic. Roger Ebert revisited it in his "Great Movies" series. After giving it a three-star rating in his original review, Ebert acknowledged in his "Great Movies" essay that, like many viewers, he had initially underestimated the film's many virtues and only came to truly appreciate it through repeated viewings.

The film is number 32 on Bravo's "100 Funniest Movies". In *Total Film*'s 1990s special issue, *Groundhog Day* was deemed the best film of 1993 (the year that saw the release of *Schindler's List*, *The Piano*, *A Perfect World* and *The Fugitive*). In 2000, readers of *Total Film* voted it the seventh greatest comedy film of all time. The Writers Guild of America ranked the screenplay #27 on their list of 101 Greatest Screenplays ever written. In 2009, American literary theorist Stanley Fish named the film as among the ten best American films ever.

### Awards

- British Comedy Awards 1993 (Comedy Film)
- Saturn Award for Best Actress (Film) (Andie MacDowell, for playing Rita)

In June 2008, AFI revealed its "Ten Top Ten"—the best ten films in ten "classic" American film genres—after polling over 1,500 people from the creative community. *Groundhog Day* was acknowledged as the eighth best film in the fantasy genre.

The film is recognized by American Film Institute in these lists:

- AFI's 100 Years...100 Laughs – #34
- AFI's 100 Years...100 Passions – Nominated
- AFI's 100 Years...100 Movies (10th Anniversary Edition) – Nominated



- 2008: AFI's 10 Top 10: #8 Fantasy Film

## Interpretations and analysis

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The film is often considered an allegory of self-improvement, emphasizing that happiness comes from placing the needs of others above one's own selfish desires. Because no effort is made to explain why the time loop occurs—or why it ends—leaving the viewer to draw his or her own conclusions, writes Jonah Goldberg of the *National Review*, "we have what many believe is the best cinematic moral allegory popular culture has produced in decades."

"Groundhog Day", as an expression, has also become shorthand for the concept of spiritual transcendence. As such, the film has become a favorite of some Buddhists who see its themes of selflessness and rebirth as reflections of their own spiritual messages. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, it has been seen as a representation of purgatory. "Connors goes to his own version of hell, but since he's not evil it turns out to be purgatory, from which he is released by shedding his selfishness and committing to acts of love," wrote Goldberg. "Meanwhile, Hindus and Buddhists see versions of reincarnation here, and Jews find great significance in the fact that Connors is saved only after he performs *mitzvahs* (good deeds) and is returned to earth, not heaven, to perform more." It has even been described by some religious leaders as the "most spiritual film of our time". "The curse is lifted when Bill Murray blesses the day he has just lived," wrote the critic Rick Brookhiser. "And his reward is that the day is taken from him. Loving life includes loving the fact that it goes."

Theologian Michael P. Pholey, writing for *Touchstone Magazine*, commented on the difficulty of determining a single religious or philosophical interpretation of the film, given Ramis's "ambiguous religious beliefs" as "an agnostic raised Jewish and married to a Buddhist", and suggested that when not viewed through a "single hermeneutical lens", the film could be seen as "a stunning allegory of moral, intellectual, and even religious excellence in the face of postmodern decay, a sort of Christian-Aristotelian Pilgrim's Progress for those lost in the contemporary cosmos." Others see an interpretation of Nietzsche's directive to imagine

life—metaphorically or literally—as an endless repetition of events. "How would this shape your actions?" asks Goldberg. "What would you choose to live out for all eternity?"

## Legacy

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The phrase "Groundhog Day" has entered common usage as a reference to an unpleasant situation that continually repeats. Goldberg paraphrased the common meaning as "same stuff, different day".

In the military, referring to unpleasant, unchanging, repetitive situations as "Groundhog Day" became widespread soon after the movie's release in February 1993. A magazine article about the aircraft carrier USS *America* mentions its use by sailors in September 1993. The film was a favorite among the Rangers deployed for Operation Gothic Serpent in Somalia in 1993, because they saw the film as a metaphor of their own situation, waiting monotonous long days between raids. In February 1994, crew members of the aircraft carrier USS *Saratoga* referred to their deployment in the Adriatic Sea, in support of Bosnia operations, as Groundhog Station. A speech by President Clinton in January 1996 specifically referred to the movie and the use of the phrase by military personnel in Bosnia. Fourteen years after the movie's release, "Groundhog Day" was noted as common American military slang for any day of a tour of duty in Iraq, often as a successor to the World War II-era slang term "SNAFU" ("Situation Normal: All Fucked Up").

In his Iraq War memoir *Victory Denied*, MAJ Roger Aeschliman describes guarding assorted visiting dignitaries as his "Groundhog Day":

The dignitary changes but everything else is exactly the same. The same airplanes drop them off at the same places. The same helicopters take us to the same meetings with the same presenters covering the same topics using the same slides. We visit the same troops at the same mess halls and send them away from the same airport pads to find our own way home late at night. Over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over until we are redeemed and allowed to go home to Kansas. Amen.

Member of Parliament Dennis Skinner compared British Prime Minister Tony Blair's treatment following the 2004 Hutton

Inquiry to the film. "[The affair] was, he said, like *Groundhog Day*, with the prime minister's critics demanding one inquiry, then another inquiry, then another inquiry." Blair responded, "I could not have put it better myself. Indeed I *did* not put it better myself."

In 2004, Italian film director Giulio Manfredonia shot a remake of *Groundhog Day* under the title of *È già ieri (It's Yesterday Already)*. The movie features a mixed cast of Italian and Spanish actors and actresses and is about an egocentric TV documentarian (Antonio Albanese) who finds himself trapped in a time loop during a reportage he is taking in Tenerife.

In the 2015 memoir, *Guantánamo Diary*, Mohamedou Ould Slahi refers to the film twice to describe his ongoing confinement in Guantanamo, Cuba.

On February 2, 2016, fans of the film in Liverpool experienced their own "Groundhog Day" by binge-watching the film 12 times in 24 hours.

## Stage adaptation

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*Main article: Groundhog Day (musical)*

Although Stephen Sondheim expressed interest in creating a musical adaption of the film in 2003, he eventually concluded that " ... to make a musical of *Groundhog Day* would be to gild the lily. It cannot be improved." Nevertheless, Ramis announced in 2009 that Rubin was working on an adaptation. At a 2014 concert in Hyde Park, the Australian comedian and lyricist Tim Minchin performed a song he had written for the show, "Seeing You".

The musical was officially confirmed in April 2015, with a book by Rubin based on his and Ramis's original screenplay, directed by Matthew Warchus, choreography by Peter Darling, design by Rob Howell, and an original score and lyrics by Minchin. The production reunites most of the creative team behind the 2010 musical *Matilda*. It was premiered in 2016 at The Old Vic theatre in London as part of Warchus's debut season as artistic director there. A Broadway debut is scheduled for March 2017.