

# Poster Exhibit: Christmas Movies

Holiday traditions are many and varied: A turkey dinner, exchanging gifts, or viewing a movie at the theatre, on television, or with the latest electronic technology.

In my family we observe a holiday movie playlist.

To help spread Christmas cheer, the first holiday movie we like to watch is **Elf**.

Our daughter texts us to request that we do not view **Love Actually** until she is home for the holidays.

Our son enjoys the humour in **National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation** and how I embody the passionate father character Clark Griswold at Christmas.

I love a nostalgic visit to my childhood and the simple message of goodwill in **A Charlie Brown Christmas**.

On Christmas Eve, my wife's essential viewing is the very sentimental **It's a Wonderful Life**.

And we watch many more movies over the holidays: **A Christmas Carol, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, Home Alone, Home Alone 2: Lost in New York...**

What is your must-see holiday movie?

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# SANTA CLAUS CONQUERS THE MARTIANS (1964)

A yuletide science fiction comedy fantasy, *Santa Claus Conquers the Martians* regularly appears on lists of the worst films ever made. In the film, the Martians are worried that their children are watching too much Earth television and the only way to help their children is to allow them to have fun. To do this, Mars needs a Santa Claus figure, like on Earth, so the Martian leaders decide to abduct Santa Claus from Earth and bring him to Mars.

**Film Fact:** Filming took place over two weeks from July to August 1964 on Long Island.

# PRANCER (1989)

A Christmas fantasy drama, eight-year-old Jessica Riggs and her older brother, Steve, are being raised by their widowed father, grieving and cantankerous John whose apple farm has fallen on hard times. Jessica encounters a wounded reindeer in the woods, and certain that he is the “real” Prancer, she moves the injured animal into their barn to nurse it back to health. Jessica writes a letter to Santa that she has Prancer and on Christmas Eve, fully recovered Prancer runs out of sight, his tracks in the snow vanishing, as the sound of sleigh bells are faintly heard.

**Film Fact:** The reindeer used for Prancer was a pregnant female reindeer named Boo, because pregnant reindeer keep their antlers for longer, and she was required not to shed her antlers before filming was completed.

# A CHRISTMAS STORY (1983)

An American Christmas comedy film directed by Bob Clark and based on Jean Shepherd's semi-fictional anecdotes in his 1966 book **In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash**. The film is set in 1940's Hohman, Indiana, and all 9-year-old Ralphie wants for Christmas is a Red Ryder Carbine Action 200-shot Range Model air rifle. Ralphie's desire is rejected by his mother, his teacher, and a disgruntled department store Santa Claus, all of whom give him the same warning: "You'll shoot your eye out".

**Film Fact:** Exterior shots were filmed in Cleveland (the Parker home, Higbee's department store), however, several other Canadian locations were used: the school scenes were shot at Victoria School in St. Catharines, the Christmas tree-purchasing and Chinese restaurant scenes were filmed in Toronto, as was the sound stage filming of interior shots of the Parker home, and the flat tire scene was filmed at the foot of Cherry Street in Toronto.

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL (1951)

Scrooge (released as **A Christmas Carol** in the United States) is a British Christmas fantasy drama film starring Alastair Sim and is an adaptation of Charles Dicken's **A Christmas Carol (1843)**. On Christmas Eve 1843, the tight-fisted Ebenezer Scrooge is warned that he must change his ways or after death forever walk the earth bound in chains, and that night he will be visited by three spirits representing Christmas Past, Present and Future. On Christmas Day Scrooge gleefully realizes he still has an opportunity to make amends and become "as good a man as the old city ever knew".

**Film Fact:** The film was one of the most popular in Britain in 1952, but it was a box office disappointment in the United States as it was found to be too grim and not possess enough family entertainment value, however, the film became a holiday favourite on American television where it is broadcast regularly.

# WHITE CHRISTMAS (1954)

**White Christmas** is an American musical film starring Bing Crosby, Dany Kaye, Rosemary Clooney, and Vera-Ellen, and features the songs of Irving Berlin, including a new version of the title song, “White Christmas”, introduced by Crosby in the 1942 film **Holiday Inn**. On Christmas Eve in 1944 Europe, at the height of World War II, Broadway star Captain Bob Wallace (Crosby) and aspiring performer Private Phil Davis (Kaye) entertain the troops. After the war, the two make it big, first as performers, then as producers, and they come to the aid of their old beloved and retired general who is experiencing hardship.

**Film Fact:** The film is notable for being the first to be released in “VistaVision”, a widescreen process that entailed using twice the surface area of standard 35 mm film.

# ERNEST SAVES CHRISTMAS (1988)

**Ernest Saves Christmas** is a 1988 American Christmas comedy, set in Orlando, Florida, starring Jim Varney. This is the third film to feature the character Ernest P. Worrell and the second film in the “Ernest” series. The film chronicles Ernest's attempt to help find a replacement for an aging Santa Claus.

**Film Fact:** The film was not a critical success, though it was commercially successful, being the highest grossing of the five theatrical Ernest films, in its opening weekend it was #2 at the box office.

# NATIONAL LAMPOON'S CHRISTMAS VACATION (1989)

**National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation** is a 1989 American Christmas slapstick comedy, and it was written and co-produced by John Hughes, and stars Chevy Chase, Beverly D'Angelo, and Randy Quaid, with supporting roles by Juliette Lewis, Johnny Galecki, and special appearances by Julia Louis-Dreyfus and Brian Doyle-Murray. Based on Hughes' short story "Christmas '59" that was published in National Lampoon's magazine, it tells the story of the Griswold family spending Christmas vacation at home with their relatives and the ensuing mayhem. It is now regarded as a classic Christmas film, and it is also now regarded and listed as one of the greatest Christmas films ever made as well.

**Film Fact:** It's a common belief that Chase's ranting meltdown about his cheapskate boss was all ad-libbed. And it was – mostly. But what the audience can't see, as the camera is facing Clark while the rest of the cast has their backs to the camera, is that everyone in the cast in that scene had a single word hanging around their necks, each one a different derogatory adjective that Clark uses to describe his boss.

# ELF (2003)

**Elf** is a 2003 American Christmas comedy directed by Jon Favreau. It stars Will Ferrell as Buddy, a human raised by Santa's elves, who learns about his origins and heads to New York City to meet his biological father. James Caan, Zooey Deschanel, Mary Steenburgen, Edward Asner, and Bob Newhart appear in supporting roles. Ferrell's performance as Buddy was praised by critics and audiences alike, with many calling it one of his best performances. It has been hailed by many as a modern film classic, often listed as one of the greatest Christmas films of all time.

**Film Fact:** Principal photography began on December 9, 2002, and wrapped on March 7, 2003. Filming took place in New York City (Central Park, Rockefeller Centre) with most of the interiors (and “best” coffee shop) filmed in Vancouver, British Columbia.

# SCROOGED (1988)

**Scrooged** is a 1988 American Christmas fantasy comedy, based on the 1843 novella “A Christmas Carol” by Charles Dickens. The film is a modern retelling that follows Bill Murray in the title role as Frank Cross, a cynical and selfish television executive who is visited by a succession of ghosts on Christmas Eve intent on helping him regain his Christmas spirit. Some found the film too mean spirited or too sentimental, critics called it an alternative to traditional Christmas films, and others argued that the film was ahead of its time, making it relevant in the modern day.

**Film Fact:** Director Richard Donner had not worked with an improvisational comedian like Murray before, who ad-libbed many of his lines, saying “You don't direct [Murray], you pull him back”.



# THE CHRISTMAS THAT ALMOST WASN'T (1966)

**The Christmas That Almost Wasn't** is an American-Italian Christmas musical film. The main character Sam is a lawyer who meets Santa Claus and learns that he is upset because he has a new landlord to whom Santa owes a great deal of rent. When Sam explains the dilemma to a little boy, he calls out to the town's children to help Santa and give what money they can to pay the rent that is due. In the end, Santa gives the mean landlord a toy sailboat he wanted as a child at Christmas and the landlord rediscovers his holiday spirit.

**Film Fact:** In The Simpsons episode "Skinner's Sense of Snow" (2000), Principal Seymour Skinner shows a film called **The Christmas That Almost Wasn't, But Then Was**.

# HOME ALONE (1990)

**Home Alone** is a 1990 American Christmas live action comedy directed by Chris Columbus and written and produced by John Hughes. The first film in the “Home Alone” franchise, the film stars Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci, Daniel Stern, John Heard, and Catherine O’Hara. Culkin plays Kevin McCallister, a boy who defends his suburban Chicago home from a home invasion by a pair of robbers after his family accidentally leaves him behind on their Christmas vacation to Paris.

**Home Alone** is considered one of the best Christmas films of all time.

**Film Fact:** John Candy was available for only one day to film his scenes, which took 23 hours to shoot. He was paid only \$414, since he did the film as a favor to Hughes. In return, he was the only actor Hughes allowed to go off-script; according to Columbus, all his dialogue was improvised.

# SANTA CLAUS: THE MOVIE (1985)

**Santa Claus: The Movie** was filmed in Buckinghamshire, England at Pinewood Studios, and starred Dudley Moore, John Lithgow, and David Huddleston. It depicts the origin of Santa Claus (played by Huddleston), and his modern-day adventure to save one of his elves (Moore) who has been manipulated by an unscrupulous toy company executive (Lithgow). The movie was a box office bomb and received mostly negative reviews from critics.

**Film Fact:** For the antagonist toy company executive, the producers offered the role to Harrison Ford, Dustin Hoffman, Burt Reynolds and Johnny Carson, each of whom turned the part down. Eventually, John Lithgow was selected after a producer watched **Terms of Endearment** and realized that he had a Grinch-type look to him.

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