

# Favorite Christmas Movies

The 'What's Your Favorite Christmas Movies / Tv Specials' poll has been done before, but I thought I would obtain my own consensus. After all, opinions change from year to year, and I'm also interested to see what people like. Feel free to choose more than one answer and also to add something I may have forgotten.

[poll id="11"]

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## Telephone Operators On Skates?

Last Friday, I watched one of last year's most talked about movies (at least in my circles). I must say that the Clint Eastwood helmed/Angelina Jolie-starring film *Changeling* was well worth the months I have been endeavoring to watch it. The story itself was harrowing made even more dramatic by the fact that is factually based.

Since [taylhis](#) has already given an excellent synop, I will mention the pains taken in the creating of late 1920-early 1930s Los Angeles. Costuming, set design, the music, everything put you right there. The only building that is still standing in the greater LA locale is the City Hall itself which has been seen in numerous television series and movies (I can think of two immediately: *The Naked Gun* and the watchable if laughable updated *Dragnet* starring Tom Hanks and Dan Aykroyd). Eastwood even resurrected the LA streetcar (which have been out of service since 1961). The multi-talented director also composed the musical score for the film

which he has done in many of his efforts... primarily with his passion for jazz. The costume design was totally period. Did telephone switchboard operators really move along on roller skates... complete with key?

And here is my extreme geek topic of the day. The fact that *(The) Changeling* is a title of a TOS episode was not lost on me. In fact, some theatres received the film under the name *Nomad* which was the name of the space probe from the 1967 season two episode. Not a total geek, I had to cheat on the year the episode premiered.

A truly memorable viewing experience. Again, totally robbed at Oscar time (and Clint was not even nominated).

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## **Not So Evil... YET!**

So... we are now in week two of rehearsals. Last night was exceptionally fun. We had our first injury and it wasn't even stage related. It seems that our director had a bit of a spill earlier in the day and had a humongous gash on his forehead. Someone made the crack that he should have dialed 9-1-1 and he could have answered his own call.

We rehearsed a few of Mr. Potter's scenes and while I tried my best to be good and evil, I was having a bit of difficulty. For one thing, I kept hearing someone humming the "Imperial March" (or Darth Vader's theme) from *The Empire Strikes Back*. No goon to lead me in so I improvised which did not help matters at all. So, while fun, I don't think we got a great deal accomplished.

After rehearsal, I went home and watched my new rental, the second X-Files big screen extravaganza entitled, [\*I Want to\*](#)

[Believe](#). It was definitely the uncut director's edition because there were a few rather gruesome scenes that would have NEVER made it to movie screens rather long the television series. But, being a fan of Agents Mulder and Scully, I enjoyed it.

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## So What Happens AFTER You Push The Button

That is when the enthralling if not totally preposterous events begin to unfold in *The Box*. A likable couple with a young son are approached by a creepy looking man with a device that contains a button that button that when pushed rewards the pusher one million dollars (tax-free). The price: the death of a person whom you do not know. It could be an innocent new born infant or a murderer on death row. Arthur (James Marsden) and Norma (Cameron Diaz) Lewis certainly could use the million but are they willing to have "blood on their hands" after the button is pressed? I think the movie would have been rather dull if they sat around discussing the moral conundrum and if they had simply refused it would have been a twenty minute show.

I'm sure I have read a short story or two in which this scenario is played out but this movie puts a whole new spin on the consequences. What is purpose behind the box? Who exactly is the mysterious man named Arlington Steward (played deliciously by the creepy Frank Langella)? That's as far as I go. I do think the reason I liked it is the fact that it was so *Twilight Zone*-ish and was not for one moment boring.

This was a reunion of sorts for Langella and Marsden.

Langella played Perry White and Marsden played Richard White in *Superman Returns*.

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## Post Victory Horror

tonight after watching the Bombers take game one in the ALCS thanks in no small part to C.C. Sabathia's excellent pitching plus some errors in the field by the Angels, I watched my latest DVD rental. I have never seen a Sam Raimi directed effort apart from the blockbuster *Spider-Man* films. Apparently, he was well regarded as a low-budget horror maker and made his return to the genre last year in the aptly titled, [Drag Me to Hell](#). This decidedly B-movie was equal parts fright, gore, and humor (mainly from some of the ridiculous situations, but I think this was the intent... not taking itself too seriously).

The film follows a bank loan employee who is a possible candidate for a promotion to assistant manager. Christine is approached by an elderly gypsy woman (complete with a creepy glass eye) who is in need of an extension on her delinquent mortgage payment. When the request is denied, the old beggar woman takes it quite personally and places an evil spirit upon our heroine and (you guessed it) strange, horrific things begin to happen that only Christine is witness to.

Christine's boyfriend, Clay, is skeptical to say the least. However, he does accompany her to a psychic who knows how to rid the woman of her problem before she is literally... well... you know dragged to hell. Goofy, yes but is there a b-grade horror film that isn't? Plus, you get to see the wide acting ability of Justin Long who you may remember from the live-action *Alvin and the Chipmunks*... so maybe not so much since he

was the voice of Alvin.

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# The Dark Night & Man Of Steel Public Enemies

Bats and Supes doing battle against other superheroes... President Lex Luthor... a kryptonite meteor on its way to Earth. These are just three of the major plots in the new animated PG-13 rated movie from the D.C. Universe: [Batman/Superman: Public Enemies](#). And as far as I am concerned, the best so far.

Following a country-wide economic collapse, the megalomaniac, billionaire is elected leader of the United States, apparently he was in the right place at the right time and promised prosperity for all (HEHE). The movie, nor the comic stated such, but I have a feeling ol' Lexy was more of the problem surrounding the collapse than the recovery. After taking over the Oval Office, some of the Justice League for some reason came to join Luthor to make the country "safe."

In a scheme to lure Superman into a trap, the president asks to meet to discuss working together to destroy the approaching meteor. Instead, he has the cybernetic, kryptonite-hearted Metallo lying in wait. During the battle with assistance from Batman, Metallo is "murdered" and a billion dollar bounty is placed on the Man of Steel. This draws out almost every greedy minor villain conceivable. Not only the supervillains, but also those heroes who are somehow blinded by Luthor's machinations.

There is non-stop action throughout the movie which was really cool... definitely more suited for an animated feature. My one

complaint: where are all the major villains besides Luthor (no Joker, Catwoman, Bizarro)? Instead, we get cameos by Gorilla Grodd, Solomon Grundy, and a bunch of others I barely recognized. But that is only a minor quibble. I also liked the return of Luthor's battle suit.

So... I highly recommend this movie to anyone who enjoys the animated world of D.C. Comics. I read the graphic novel a few years ago and still greatly enjoyed the movie! Plus, Allison Mack joined the list of *Smallville* cast members to voice another animated D.C. character.

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## **You Haven't Heard Of Bulbo, The Wicked Witch Of The West's Dimwitted Son?**

I found a big behind-the-scenes book about my favorite movie, *The Wizard of Oz*. I remember getting this book as a kid, but I read the juicy parts (many of the rumors about wild Munchkin behavior are true), skipped the rest of the book, and forgot about it. So I came across it as an adult; it's one of the few things that somehow clang to us through more than a few moves throughout the midwest. I've been enjoying reading many Oz secrets lately, and I'm currently on the chapter about the script. In the '30's, MGM (the movie studio that made the *Wizard of Oz*) had salaried writers, so they would assign a few to write a "treatment" of a project, or a sample of script. Several of the writers had some interesting ideas for L. Frank Baum's Oz project; including bizarre characters. For example, one writer created a son for the Wicked Witch of the West – a dimwitted guy named Bulbo. She wanted to attack Oz with "ten

thousand armies, 2 thousand wolves, and 200 flying monkeys” to defeat the Wizard and make Bulbo the king of Oz. In another treatment, the cowardly lion was actually a man who was to marry a girl named Sylvia. The witch wanted Sylvia for her son Bulbo’s bride, so she turned the man into the cowardly lion. A couple of the writers who were working as a team decided that there shouldn’t be any death in their family-friendly picture, so they decided that when the house falls on the Wicked Witch of the East, she should turn into something less threatening; like a parrot or a white tabby cat. That would have been silly!

While all of these possible Oz variations are fun to read about, I’m really glad that the Wizard of Oz ended up as the movie its legions of fans are familiar with – we love it just the way it is!

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## Final Dress

Yes, tonight was the final dress rehearsal for [You Have the Right to Remain Dead](#). We had a few snags but nothing that will prevent us from having an AWESOME opening night tomorrow. We were instructed to come home, get a good night’s sleep, relax tomorrow (glad I have the day off), and look over our lines. Very sound advice from a first time director who has done a sensational job! I love directors who just let the actors do their thing and offer critiques when they are needed AFTER the rehearsal is completed. Just another fantastic experience!

NOW my little pitch: to all of you readers who are planning to attend [Little Shop of Horrors](#) PLEASE do so. My request is this: the show I am in runs THIS WEEKEND ONLY (four shows, one

Friday, two Saturday shows, and one Sunday matinee). *Little Shop* has a total of 7 performances over two weekends (one of which I WILL BE attending... three good friends in the cast notwithstanding). So you have ample opportunity to enjoy both because they are both excellent shows. Ok.. plug over.

After tonight's rehearsal, I came home and watched an EXCELLENT movie. I can only say this without giving away the whole movie because there is sooooo much to tell. *Inside Man* in a nutshell features a powerhouse cast of two Academy Award winners (Denzel Washington and Jodie Foster) plus the talented Clive Owen and Christopher Plummer. Of the plot, I will say that it concerns the perfect bank heist. Never boring and has many layers and intricacies. I find that cooling down from the excitement of the evening before a show opens is best spent indulging in not so ordinary things. I will watch the shows I have DVRed(?) at a later date.

Once again, I have had the pleasure of working with new cast members (I have now worked with TWO Heffelfinger guys) and once again ventured out into another fantastic venue! Thanks everyone.

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## New TV!

Last night, my husband and I decided to visit an old friend we haven't seen in some time – The Redbox. You all know the Redbox – the dvd rental machine that sits like a swollen ATM at many Walmarts, Meijers, Walgreens and the like. Dvd rental at the Redbox is \$1 per night, and one of the perks of the Redbox is lack of selection. Yes, I said **lack** of selection. In this day and age of rushing from here to there, who has time to actually make an extra stop to go into a video store



and browse hundreds of selections? We really enjoyed our Redbox summer, renting a movie almost every night and exhausting pretty much the entire Redbox collection. Now the kids have been in school for a few months already, and time has gone by without us having time to think about our long-lost Redbox bud. So anyway, last night, with the cold wind howling outside, we thought it to be the perfect night to stay up a little too late with a random Redbox horror movie. It was [Seventh Moon](#), and it seemed to actually be pretty scary, except that it is a 'dark and shaky' type horror movie – the camera moves around a lot, and the entire movie takes place in the dark. We turned off our lights in the house, but we still couldn't really see. Remembering what a repairman had told him once, my husband suggested we take the front panel off the tv and dust a little mirror inside – supposedly we would get a brighter picture. Thinking it sounded easy (?), I agreed and we began to unscrew our tv. We get the panel loosened and discover that there isn't any dust on the screen! And, you'd be surprised at how much empty space there is in a big tv! But anyway, we started to put it back together when CRACK! Uh, oh. Here's a hint – if you ever decide to tackle a home improvement project on the suggestion of someone else, no matter how small the project, always remember *who* told you to do *what* so that person can be held accountable!

So we are trying to put the tv back together, and we were thinking that at this point, we would just like to go back to our movie, however dark it might be, we just want to be able to WATCH the movie on a working tv. But then my husband sees the small mirror at the bottom that is FULL of dust! I rigged a paper towel rod with a dust cloth, and reached in there and dusted off that little mirror. We tried again to put the tv back together, encouraged and excited by the fact that we might have actually been able to fix it. We put the tv back together, but we had cracked something, so it's not really properly lined up and is now missing a few screws, oopsie.

BUT... the picture is SO much brighter! Not only were we able to see the rest of the movie (which was a nice 'n suspenseful creature feature), but now we can actually watch tv during the day! Oh, if only we had discovered our new tv during those bright summer days months ago when the Chicago Cubs were still invited to play baseball...

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## Morning Guilty Pleasure

This morning, I was able to catch most of *Regis and Kelly* (the ONLY celebrity focused morning show I enjoy watching). As I made mention of earlier, John Stamos is now in previews for *Bye, Bye Birdie* for its return to the Broadway stage since the debut 50 years ago (WOW!). Mr. Stamos will be playing the lead part of Albert Peterson. Dick Van Dyke originated the role of Conrad Birdie's manager in the original production as well as the original movie. The cinematic experience does not do the stage version justice at all. Not sure why but like many musicals it is much better to have that live, theatrical experience. I honestly cannot think of many musicals that have translated better or at least as enjoyably on the screen. I guess I would say *The Sound of Music* only because it has been so ingrained into pop culture as a movie that many forget or don't realize that it was Rodgers and Hammerstein's theatrical swan song. That reason and the puppet show version of "The Lonely Goatherd" is my favorite part of the movie and IS NOT in the stage version.

Ok... back to my original topic. During the interview, Reege made mention of the fact that Ann-Margrock (err.. Margret) played the young girl, Kim MacAfee in the movie. Shortly after the movie was filmed, Ms. Margret would be Presley's leading lady in my mother's favorite Elvis movie, *Viva Las*

*Vegas*. However, Mom was not aware that she was in the cast of *Birdie*.

Here's a few more tidbits: one of our fellow [tangenteers](#) has played the role of pop singing idol/draftee Conrad Birdie. I assisted in the directing of my high school alma mater's production a few years ago. AND there was a veery short lived sequel (4 performances) entitled [Bring Back Birdie](#) which was set twenty years following the events of the original. Twenty years is quite a LONG time to wait to attempt a comeback.