

There is no better way to celebrate the holidays than with Bing Crosby

2018-12-24 11:00:00 by [Matthew Razak](#)


May all your Christmases be movies

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The holidays are the perfect time to watch movies. Most people have at least a little extra time off work, you're stuffed full of food, and there's literally hundreds of Christmas movies to choose from. That's probably why nearly everyone has a holiday movie tradition of some sort, and I'm sure yours is fantastic. For me, however, the only way to go is the classics, and that means sitting down to watch *White Christmas* and *Holiday Inn* for the umpteenth time every year.

I don't actually know when this tradition started but it's stuck for the most part (despite my wife's consternation). Sure, we've missed a year here or there, but mostly I, my brother, and my mom, with dad snoring away in his chair, have watched these two movies every year during the holiday season. Every once in a while we'll sprinkle in *It's a Wonderful Life* too, but the mainstays are Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire in *Holiday Inn* followed by Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye in *White Christmas*. They are my holiday comfort food, and they're classics.



Now, you may make the argument that *Holiday Inn* is both not a Christmas movie and horribly racist since it has a scene with blackface in it. The answer to the latter is a definitive, "Yes." It's impossible to divorce this scene from the film, and as I've gotten older and gained more understanding of it, harder and harder to enjoy the film around it because of it. However, I will argue that this is a Christmas movie as the main points of the plot, and the biggest song from it, all happen at Christmas. It's the holiday


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season that brings Bing Crosby and Marjorie Reynolds back together, even if that's on a fake movie set. It's also the film that "White Christmas" is from. If that doesn't make it a Christmas movie I don't know what does. Plus, you get catchy tunes for nearly every holiday that exists, and Fred Astaire dancing, a gift to the world that should be treasured at any occasion.

Then you have *White Christmas*. The weird, not-sequel to *Holiday Inn*, which took the hit song from that movie and sung it again in a film that had nothing to do with the original other than Bing Crosby was back. This one is, honestly, a lot more fun. Danny Kaye is no Fred Astaire, but he lends a comedic vibe to the proceedings that make things more entertaining. The plot is a whole lot more Christmas heavy too, and anyone who doesn't tear up at the end when the Major General gives his speech clearly has no Christmas spirit at all.

I think, though, that the biggest part about this tradition for me is actually sitting down and watching some classic movies. They might not be the best musicals ever made, but watching these two films definitely kindled my love of classic Hollywood, and especially the musical. Without them I would not have been introduced to Fred Astaire or grown up watching countless other studio musicals. There is a certain magic to these older films that belies a more modern take on the Christmas movie. Maybe it's just nostalgia (for a time I wasn't even alive), but the movies feel simpler and by that context more comfortable.

There's plenty of holiday traditions out there, as you'll see below, but going back to the classics never hurts. There's a reason they're classic. There's a reason "White Christmas" and Bing Crosby are still playing over and over during the holidays. For most, it's because you just catch it on the radio but for me it's because my family came together to sit down and watch something. It's a rarer and rarer moment these days since my brother and I have children and families of our own. In fact this year we missed our screening of the film due to busy schedules and life. It's not the first time we've missed it, of course, but it's still missed.

And really, it's not the films themselves, I suppose. It could have been any two movies that my family sat down to watch, these were just two of my mom's favorites. The point isn't the movies, it's the time spent together, doing something we grew up with. There's so much to distract us in the world that sitting down to watch Fred Astaire tap dance to fireworks or Vera-Ellen moving her foot at impossible speeds is more than a movie, it's a break. A chance to enjoy a moment that is less about the movies and more about the moment itself.

I hope you've got something like that with your family this holiday season.



Jesse Lab

I tend to be pretty predictable when it comes to Christmas traditions. As someone that absolutely loves the holidays, I make it a point to watch as many Christmas movies or specials as possible, both new and old and ones I've never seen before. This year I decided to go back and watch the 2000 *Grinch* movie to see if I still loved it as an adult (I did not), sit through the bizarre but very enjoyable *Anna and the Apocalypse*, then ~~endure~~ love the undisputed best Christmas classic of all time, *Jingle All the Way*.

But there are three movies/specials that will always stay in my rotation every year no matter what. I always scrounge around TV listings to find any airings of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* and the *Charlie Brown Christmas Special* and record them for the lead up to Christmas Day. The big clincher though is that every Christmas Eve, I curl up with a blanket and hot cocoa and watch *A Christmas Carol* until midnight. Each year I rotate it out between my two personal favorite versions, the Patrick Stewart one and the George C. Scott one, though the Disney version with Scrooge McDuck creeps its way in on occasion. I'm the kind of parasite that tries to absorb as much Christmas cheer as I can in 25 days and I think I succeeded this year.



Sam van der Meer

I mean, I'm no Scrooge. I just... don't have many Christmas traditions, particularly related to movie-going -- that year-round obsession and source of daily indecision. *Should I watch this silent Ozu movie that might make me sleep or this weird spaghetti western with Henry Silva... I don't want to watch Death Wish V, but that's all I have time for...*

No, the holidays are just business as usual for 'ol Sam. And yet, there's something every year that comes around this time of year. The multiplexes line the marquee with Oscar wannabes and... coal. Coal for naughty children.

The closest thing I have to a holiday film tradition is seeing garbage, garbage movies -- holiday-themed or not -- with friends. *Annie* in 2014 sort of got the ball rolling. We *paid money* to see *Victor Frankenstein*. 2016 and '17 were lapses; we all saw *Phantom Thread* and had a nice dinner last year. To make up for it? This year graces us with *Robin Hood*, *The Grinch*, *The Possession of Hannah Grace*... The studio even wrapped a nice lump just for me in the form of a recut *Deadpool 2*, just in time to start a fire under my pine needles and put rocks in my stockings. Because to appreciate cream, ya gotta drink milk.



The reason I love the *Muppets Christmas Carol* is because it reaffirms my faith in humanity. Do I need Muppets singing to me? I do. Do I need Rizzo the Rat walking me through Dickensian tropes of fictional narration? Yes, I do. Do I want Michael Caine dwelling on the nuances and injustices of life in a musical manner? 100%. (It doesn't seem to matter that I was forced to endure watching a heinously eyeliner-clad younger Michael Caine in the *Ipccress File* during film lectures - despite his failings, he is a treasure.) I need this movie as much as I need to see Christmas lights and Christmas trees because the Muppets are 100% wholesome and it's just not Christmas without them.

Just look at Kermit as Bob Cratchit. The Frog (the leader of the Muppets, as one insightful [Twitterer commented](#)) is hardworking. He's honest. He's kind. He's the best flipping thing that ever happened to cinema and I don't know how people get through life without him. If more people were like Kermit, the world would be a better place. Kermit, if you're listening, I want you to know that, in the midst of every Christmas film out there, you will always be the most wonderful thing on my film radar. I raise my glass to you.

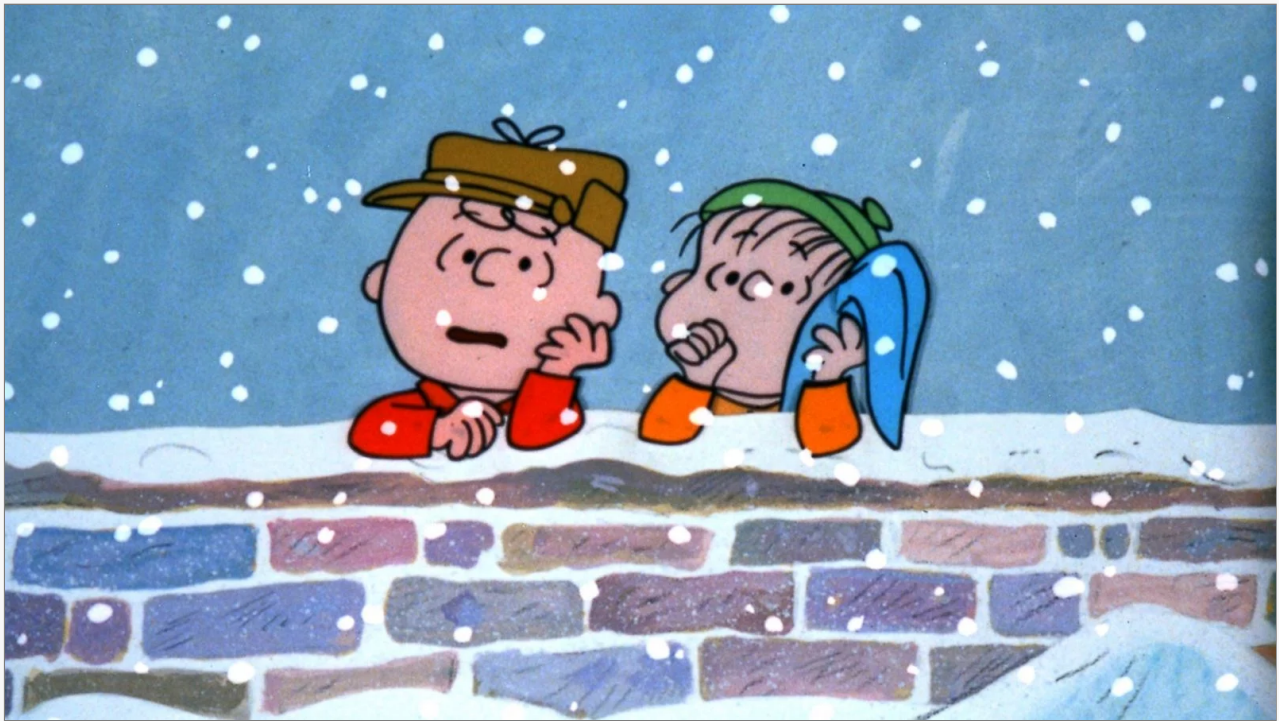


Tarah Bleier

What can one say about this classic film? *Home Alone*, for some reason, has become a holiday movie watching tradition of mine. When I talk about *Home Alone* I mean the original film that started it all, not the awful sequels, *Home Alone 3* and *Home Alone 4*. This film is always on this time of year and because it took place during the holiday season it made sense that I heavily associate the holidays with it. I love all of Kevin's antics, some of the memorable scenes and just the whole premise of the film.

As a child, I think the concept of being left alone while your entire family is on vacation sounded cool to me. I also enjoyed seeing how a kid defended his home against The Wet Bandits. The classic Christmas songs that play also make it feel more like a holiday film and I loved seeing Kevin decorate the tree. You feel a sense of loneliness for him that I think some can feel this time of year too. The main message I got from this film is how important your family is no matter what of year and also how sometimes

family and companionship may come from unexpected places during this time of year. That's why *Home Alone* is and will always be my holiday movie tradition.



Drew Stuart

For all of the Charlie Browns in the world, *A Charlie Brown Christmas* is the expertly crafted antidote to Christmas blues.

My family watches this movie every year. More or less. We used to watch it all together every single year in the span of the days leading up to Christmas. And, as if one viewing wasn't enough, come, Christmas Eve, we'd watch at least one part of it again at church. I haven't researched this, so don't quote me, but I have a sneaking suspicion that every church shows the clip of Linus spelling out the meaning of Christmas for Charlie Brown. It's a good clip. It's explicit in its goals and its meaning. It's very easy.

However, it isn't this clip that makes *A Charlie Brown Christmas* so special to me. It's the scene following it, where Charlie Brown attempts to decorate his little tree, then gives up only to have his friends miraculously transform his tree from a weak sapling into a Christmas tree anyone could be proud of. It's a moment that encapsulates what Christmas is all about without spelling it out the audience, as Linus so readily did in the scene before.

We don't watch *A Charlie Brown Christmas* as a family much anymore. It seems that with time, our adherence to old traditions has weakened. But I still watch it every year. And it brings me nothing but joy.



Rick Lash

Bah humbug. The English language boasts few more magical pairings of words. They encompass a thousand cacophonous images and emotions that embody *the most magical time of the year* and shit all over each and every one of them.

I'm a holiday devotee, but habit and inclination have fallen victim to something far more sinister than the shrinking of a Grinch-like heart, more miserly than the all-consuming urge to wring every coffer from the pockets of those around me. Alas, my holiday cheer and traditions are being supplanted by the uninformed viewing whims of diminutive overlords.

With literally thousands of holiday specials and films at my fingertips and a new 65-inch behemoth squatting over my garland-ridden fireplace ready to spew them forth for consumption by yours truly (drunk on eggnog and dreams of sugar plum fairies dancing on poles to T-Pain's *Booty Werk*), I find myself vexed, complicit in my sensory imprisonment in the face of holiday trash.

All I want for Christmas used to be a relatively enjoyable song to queue come late November, now it's a ... movie ... based on the song, and it's the overture to my *Groundhog Day* style nightmare. In it, I'm forced to watch the following, again, and again, and again:

"Young Mariah desperately wants a puppy for Christmas, but her parents are not convinced that she should have one. They agree to let Mariah dog-sit the puppy Jack and if she can take care of Jack, then she can have a dog of her very own."

This is my holiday tradition and I fear there's no end in sight. So, I draw the curtains, dim the lights, set the antipersonnel device by the chimney with care, and pray it all ends soon.



Chris Compendio

Folks, I realize that such a holiday-centered group feature should be wholesome, but when it comes to Christmas traditions, the only constant every year is that I am forced to watch the cinematic travesty known as *Love Actually*. This may come across as a wee bit harsh, but at least once a month, this movie comes up in my head and I devote some portion of my being feeling absolute hatred over it. Why is this, you ask? I love a good energetic ensemble story, but everyone in *Love Actually* acts either creepy, weird, or both.

Every character exhibits selfishness, entitlement, shallowness, predatory behavior, or total disregard for rationality. For a movie that is supposed to be about how the holidays bring us all together, this story really shows off some of the worst traits of humankind. Not one of these stories warmed my heart at all, and the ones that weren't problematic just made me feel *bad* at the end. I don't have enough space in this feature to rant about each individual plotline but just think about each one of them *really hard*. Andrew Lincoln and the cue cards, Alan Rickman eyeing a younger lady at the expense of poor Emma Thompson as his wife, Hugh Grant causing a diplomatic crisis as the Prime Minister as an f' you to the horny POTUS, yadda yadda.

Every Christmas season, I sit down and watch this with family and friends at large gatherings, because this goddamn movie always has to be on cable during this time. They laugh, cry, etc., and in the meanwhile, I plot their downfalls. Fucking fuck *Love Actually*. And Merry Christmas!



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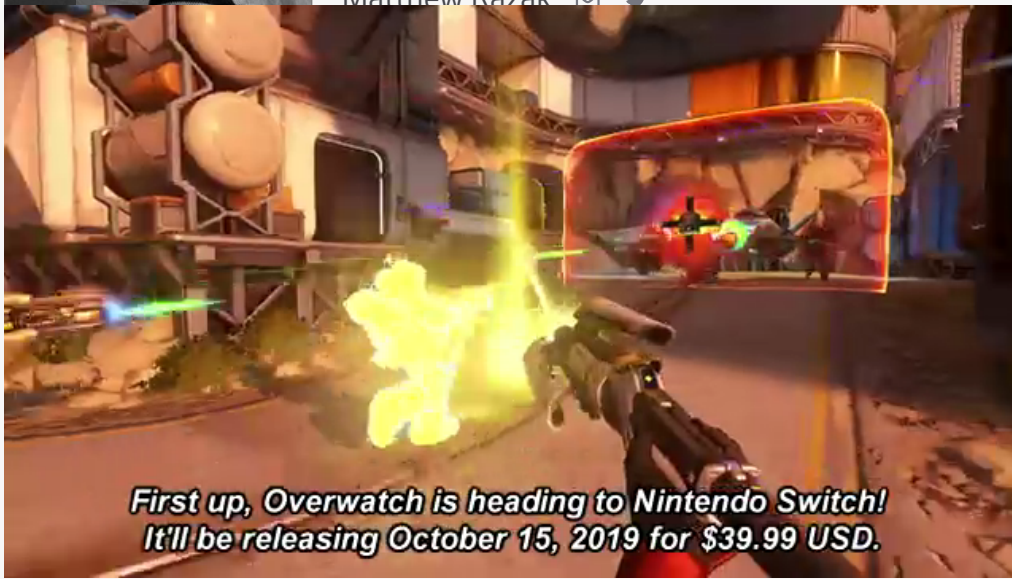


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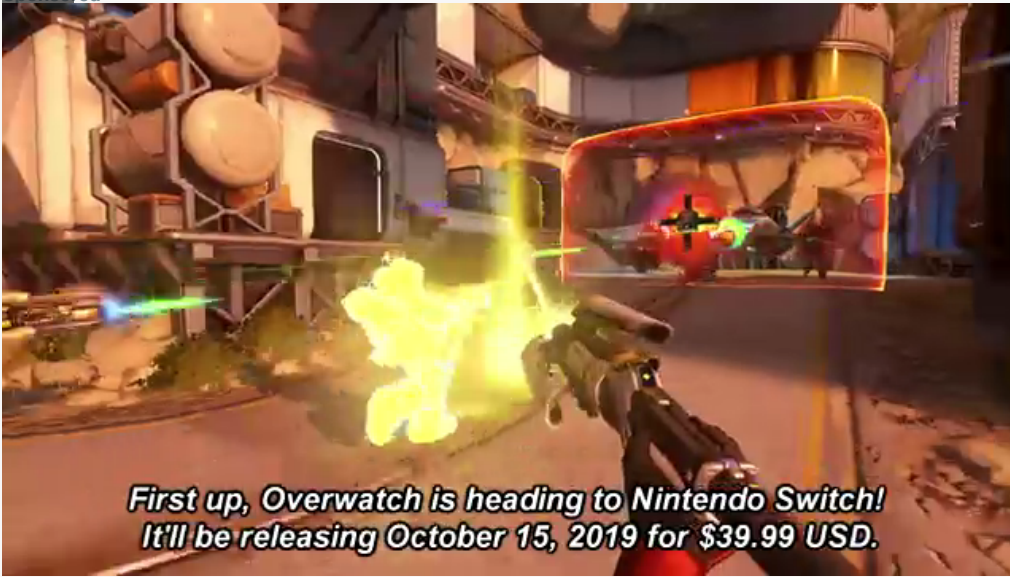
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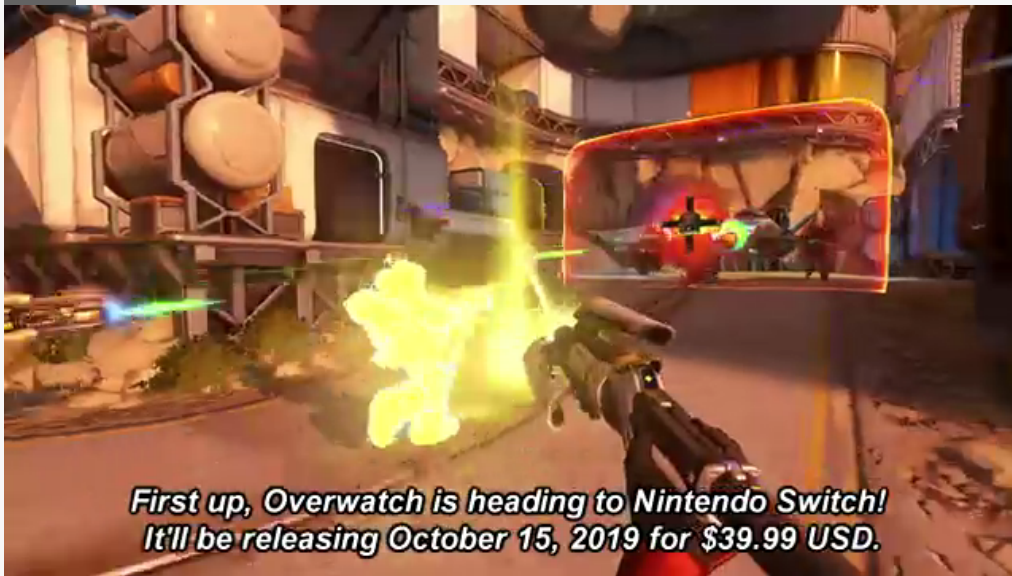
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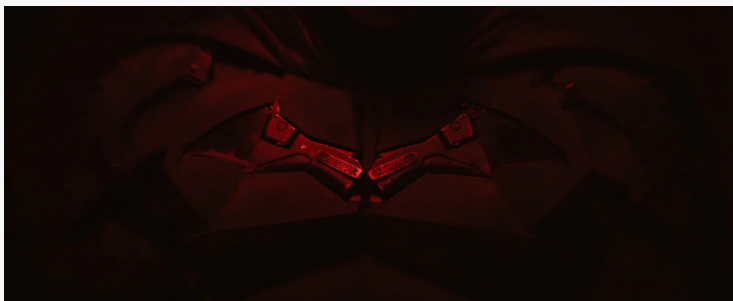
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Matt Reeves shares camera test for Rob Pattinson as 'The Batman'

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#TheBatman#CameraTest<https://t.co/M1tAE2aTA1>

— Matt Reeves (@mattreevesLA) February 13, 2020

On Twitter this evening, director Matt Reeves shared a camera test for his upcoming Rob Pattinson starring *The Batman* and we now have a decent idea of how the former *Twilight* star will look as the caped crusader. Cast in a light that almost made me confuse him for *Daredevil*, I do have to admit that Rob looks pretty cool as *Batman*. There's maybe a bit too much armor going on, but this suit does seem to be noticeably different from past silver screen *Batman* iterations.

The darker lighting is clearly in an effort to see how Pattinson will look in *Batman's* typical low-light situations. It's not often you see *Batman* gallivanting around Gotham in broad daylight and shooting anything in low-light can be tough. Nailing the look of a costume under those circumstances is key and Reeves seems to have found a solid design.

Now we just need to see a trailer or something and I might actually be on board with this film.

