

# SIX CHRISTMAS MOVIES YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

Christmas is just around the corner so here is an early gift of some of my favorite and less familiar holiday movies:

1

## THE GREAT RUPERT

Terry Moore, Jimmy Durante and Queenie Smith in *The Great Rupert* (1950)



The one and only Jimmy Durante stars in a quirky comedy featuring a dancing squirrel who, after being sent away by his trainer, finds a new home in the rafters of his old abode. Durante and his impoverished circus-performing family move in and take over. Durante's wife (Queenie Smith) prays for a pair of shoes for her lovely daughter Rosalinda. Her prayers are answered when the squirrel tosses down cash that the miserly property owner has stashed behind a wall, and Durante and family believe it to be a gift from heaven.

2

## CHRISTMAS IN CONNECTICUT (1945 VERSION)


Barbara Stanwyck and S.Z. Sakall in *Christmas in Connecticut* (1945)



*Christmas in Connecticut* (1945 version): Barbara Stanwyck plays a Martha Stewart-type columnist for a housekeeping magazine who faces a dilemma when the magazine's overbearing publisher, Sydney Greensteeet, talks her into entertaining a war veteran at Christmas as a publicity stunt and then invites

himself to Stanwyck's fictional home. The lovable S.Z. Sakall (the bartender of Rick's Café in *Casablanca*) is the chef who creates the recipes Stanwyck takes credit for. Hilarious complications ensue when Stanwyck, who cannot cook, and her supporting team struggle to maintain the charade.



 Bill Curtis

3

## PRANCER

Rebecca Harrell in *Prancer* (1989)



A precocious eight-year-old farm girl finds an injured reindeer which she believes is Santa's Prancer and nurses him back to health so he can rejoin Santa's team in time for Christmas. Rebecca Harrell will steal your heart as the youngster, Sam Elliott is sympathetic as her father, and the settings and cinematography are beautiful; in short, the perfect family movie to watch year after year.

4

## REMEMBER THE NIGHT

Barbara Stanwyck, Fred MacMurray and cow in *Remember the Night* (1940)



Barbara Stanwyck again, this time in a serious role as a shoplifter of a diamond bracelet who is bailed out of

prison by assistant D.A. Fred MacMurray when her trial is postponed over the holidays. MacMurray offers her a ride home to Indiana. Stanwyck's mother refuses her and she winds up sharing an old-fashioned Christmas with MacMurray's loving family. Of course, Stanwyck and MacMurray fall in love, but the film avoids a clichéd resolution where everything is neatly tied up with a red and green Christmas bow.

5

**COME TO THE STABLE**



Celeste Holm and Loretta Young in *Come to the Stable* (1949)

Two nuns from a French convent (Loretta Young and Celeste Holm) travel to a New England town named Bethlehem to uphold a promise they made to St. Jude during the Second World War to build a hospital for sick children. Obstacles get in the way, especially to acquiring land owned by a Broadway songwriter (Hugh Marlowe) who does not want a children's hospital in his back yard. An unconscious wartime connection between his music and the origin of the nuns' plainchant leads him to rethink his opposition to the hospital.

6

**THE BISHOP'S WIFE (1947 VERSION)**



Cary Grant and Loretta Young in *The Bishop's Wife* (1947)

My personal favorite of all Christmas movies. David Niven is the bishop who neglects his devoted wife, Julia (Loretta Young), as he struggles to raise money to build a cathedral to satisfy the wish of a wealthy parishioner. He prays for guidance which appears in the form of an angel (Cary Grant), who finds himself falling for Julia and plays off the bishop's jealousy to accomplish his angelic task. Excellent supporting performances by Gladys Cooper as the dowager and Monty Wooley as an aging professor, and a memorable Hugo Friedhofer score combine to make this a Christmas movie to treasure.

**All of these movies are available on DVD and many can be borrowed from your local library. Merry Christmas!**



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*Happy Holidays*