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Watch These Holiday Specials Leading Up to Christmas

by Winnie McCroy
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It seems like the holidays arrive earlier every year; before we even reached Thanksgiving, the shop windows were crammed with Christmas trees, and stores pipe in canned carols to subliminally get you into the gift-giving mood. Most people think this is terrible. But me -- I love it! I am certifiably crazy for Christmas!

From the tinsel decorations to the special dishes and family traditions, I love it all. But what I love most are those wonderful, well-worn holiday specials. Be it from my own private DVD stash or from the steady diet that the Hallmark Channel and ABC Family serves up, when the cold winter winds whip, there's

no place cozier than being hugged up on the couch with my lover or best guy, watching those corny holiday specials and movies that I love.

For those of you who aren't Christmas crazy, EDGE is gracious enough to share the gift of good taste. These hit holiday films will make you laugh, cry and remember just what the holidays mean. See our top 25 picks.

1. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer: When it comes to holiday classics, these Rankin/Bass stop-motion films are the touchstone. In this early 1964 special, you'll watch Rudolph team up with the ultra-gay dentist-wannabe Hermie the Elf to hang with the butch, bearded Yukon Cornelius and battle the Abominable Snow Monster, and match them both with their true calling. It's like the first-ever 'It Gets Better' PSA.

2. Rudolph's Shiny New Year: This 1976 sequel has Rudolph helping Father Time find a missing Baby New Year with comically huge ears before midnight on New Year's Eve. He'll travel through the Archipelago of Last Years and battle the evil vulture Aeon the Terrible to keep time ticking. Thanks, Rudy, for ensuring the ravages of age continue...



Amy Sedaris, James Caan, Will Ferrell (Source:IMDB)

3. Santa Claus is Coming to Town: This 1970 stop-motion TV special features Fred Astaire as the genial narrator, who tells the story of how Santa Claus and other Christmas traditions came to be. It's a hoot finding out how Kris Kringle defeats the Burgermeister Meisterburger. The characters are made of wood and plastic, and the detail work is amazing.

4. Elf: Those Rankin/Bass specials directly influenced the look of this film, in which Will Ferrell stars as a dippy orphan raised by elves in the North Pole who heads to New York City to meet his real father, played by James Caan, and finds love with the quirky Zooey Deschanel. Because nothing says Christmas like James Caan.

5. Frosty the Snowman: This 1969 Rankin-Bass special based on the song of the same name features comedian Jimmy Durante as the narrator in the first use of traditional cel animation in a Christmas special. You'll love seeing that magic hat bring old Frosty to life!

6. The Year Without a Santa Claus: When Santa wakes up with a cold on Christmas Eve, he decides to take a



(Source:destinationssouth.net)

holiday, believing no one will miss him. It takes the work of his elves Jingle and Jangle and some earnest kids to change his mind. The best part are the songs by the warring brothers, Snow Miser and Heat Miser.



(Source:www.newspaperalum.com)

7. Star Wars Holiday Special: This 1978 TV special follows Chewbacca and Han Solo to Kashyyyk to celebrate Life Day. And if that isn't weird enough, it features a pre-Golden Girls Bea Arthur as the proprietress of the alien cantina. Although one critic quipped that the special could have been written and directed by "a sentient bag of cocaine," it was the first spinoff of the Star Wars franchise, and set the tone for the prequels to come.

8. A Christmas Story: Peter Billingsley stars in this Christmas classic about an Ohio family working to make ends meet, and a son who wants nothing more than his Red Ryder carbine action 200-shot Range Model air rifle with the compass on the stock and "this thing which tells time." Oh Ralphie... you'll shoot your eye out!



(Source:Wikipedia)

9. Emmet Otter's Jug-Band Christmas: Based on the children's storybook by Russell Hoban, this 1978 Jim Henson adaptation follows Emmet Otter and his Ma, who engage in a "Gift of the Magi" twist, each selling the thing that ensure their own livelihood in order to buy the other a perfect present. Henson noted that the special was the first time they used such elaborate, highly detailed sets and platforms in their filming.

10. A Charlie Brown Christmas: This musical, animated TV special by Charles M. Schulz finds poor Charlie Brown depressed despite the upcoming holidays, until Lucy helps him find the true meaning of Christmas. Hint: It's the birth of Little Baby Jesus. This special spawned the infamous "Charlie Brown Christmas Tree."

11. How the Grinch Stole Christmas: This 1966 animated TV special by Chuck Jones brings to life the eponymous book by Dr. Seuss, about a misanthrope who tries to take Christmas away from the people of Whosville. Boris Karloff is the voice of The Grinch. Jim Carrey plays the green meanie in the 2000 feature film version.



(Source:amazon.com)

12. A Christmas Carol: There are many versions of this movie, but the best of the bunch include the 1951 version with Alastair Sim, followed by the pitch-perfect 1970 musical version starring Albert Finney, an equally good version starring Patrick Stewart as the famed miser and the throaty 2004 version featuring Kelsey Grammer, with a woefully miscast Jane Krakowski as the Ghost of Christmas Past.

13. Rich Little's Christmas Carol: This crafty HBO special premiered on December 16, 1979. It's a version of "A Christmas Carol" that features talented impressionist Rich Little playing all the characters, in character: For example, his Jacob Marley comes via Little's impression of Richard Nixon. It's dated, but still very clever.

14. The Judy Garland Christmas Show: Some readers might be too green to have seen this 1963 hit special that features Garland with her kids, Liza Minnelli and Joey and Lorna Luft, but you could hardly forget hits like "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" and "Santa Claus is Coming to Town," complete with Garland's boozy mis-sung lyrics. Here's the whole thing, with commercials from the '60s.



(Source:54disneyreviews.com)

15. A Diva's Christmas Carol: Former Miss America Vanessa Williams stars as rock diva Ebony Scrooge in this modern update of the classic tale. You'll love flashbacks to her '80s girl group Desire, (featuring Rozonda 'Chilli' Thomas from Salt-n-Pepa as Marli Jacob), singing their big hit "Heartquake," and Ebony's eventual move to make good. Big ups to a flashy, sassy Kathy Griffin as the Ghost of Christmas Past.

16. A Carol Christmas: Tori Spelling plays talk show host Carol Cartman, beholden to her dead aunt Marla's sour advice on how to be a big celebrity, until it twists her life. Gary Coleman stars as the Ghost of Christmas Past, and William Shatner

shines as the Ghost of Christmas Present.



(Source:IMDB)

17. Call Me Claus: Whoopi Goldberg stars as a successful producer of a home shopping network who is tapped to take over as the next Santa Claus. Will she accept, or will she marry her creepy producer, played by Brian Stokes Mitchell? She won't.

18. Scrooged: Bill Murray is a boorish, cynical TV exec who gets visits from three ghosts on Christmas Eve, who try to get him to change his selfish ways. The best of the bunch is "Taxi" star Carol Kane as the Ghost of Christmas Present. Olympic gymnast Mary Lou Retton makes an hilarious cameo as a back-flipping Tiny Tim.



(Source:vhsieh8.wordpress.com)

19. Holiday in Handcuffs: Melissa Joan Hart is a kooky artist/waitress who kidnaps hunky customer Mario Lopez to pose as her boyfriend at a family Christmas. The stunt causes all the family members (including a gay brother) to reveal their true feelings behind the picture-perfect façade. Markie Post is excellent as the Martha Stewart-esque homemaker who suffers a nervous breakdown when she forgets to pack the extra virgin olive oil.

20. Bad Santa: Billy Bob Thornton is repulsive as a shopping-mall Santa with a serious booze problem and a serious attraction to big booties. When he teams up with a tiny black elf to rob the place, he seems destined for hell. But redemption comes in the form of a fat, dorky kid and a hot Jewish waitress with a thing for banging Santa. For the nostalgic, the film is one of the last showcases for both John Ritter and Bernie Mac.

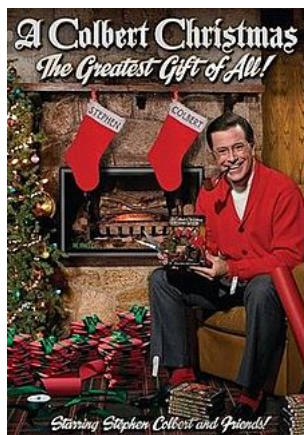
21. **The 12 Men of Christmas:** Spunky, pint-sized treasure Kristen Chenoweth plays a public-relations executive who leaves the big city for a small Montana town, where she uses her media savvy to raise funds for the emergency rescue team. And of course, she finds love. A young Anna Chlumsky is her perky assistant.



Dolly Parton and Roddy McDowell (Source:dollyparton.com)

22. **Unlikely Angel:** Dolly Parton stars as selfish country/western singer Ruby Diamond, who dies after a gig one night when she burns rubber after catching her man with another woman. Roddy McDowell stars as St. Peter, who charges her with reuniting a family torn by the death of their mother by Christmas Eve, or risk not getting her wings.

23. **A Smoky Mountain Christmas:** Parton again stars as country/western singer, but this time she's paired up with a bunch of adorable orphans hiding out in her Tennessee cottage, with mysterious Lee Majors as a reclusive backwoodsman.



(Source:Wikipedia)

24. **John Denver's Rocky Mountain Christmas with the Muppets:** Straight outta 1975 comes the special that broke records, garnering 65 million views, the largest-ever at the time for ABC. Denver was often depicted singing with The Muppets, which the disco generation went crazy for! Another beloved pairing occurred in the 1979.

25. **A Colbert Christmas: The Greatest Gift of All!:** Stephen Colbert finds himself trapped in a cabin in "bear country" as his friends -- including Elvis Costello, Toby Keith, Willie Nelson, John Legend and Feist -- stop by to sing Christmas songs. The greatest gift of all? The DVD release of the special.

Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York.



Holidays 2015

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With the holiday season in high gear, the Gayborhood was busy with concerts, brunches, Drag events, a holiday wedding, and sexy half-naked men. It even had the end of an era for Venture Inn and La Cage Aux Beach! Enjoy these festive photos!!



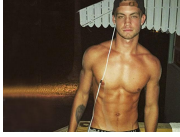
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Sam Smith took to

Instagram to celebrate his Golden Globe win as well as honor David Bowie, who passed away Sunday.

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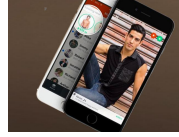
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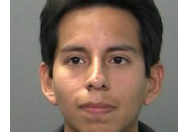
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