

A Christmas Carol: 'Tis the season for Holiday Films

Copyright 2009 Cape May Film Festival. All Rights Reserved.

A Review by
Andrew Henry, Instructor
Cape May Film Society
609-884-6700
capemayfilm@hotmail.com
www.capemayfilm.org

Brought to you by the New Jersey Film Review (www.njfilmreview.com)

A new season, a new holiday, and just in time for Christmas, a new re-telling of the Charles Dickens novel, *A Christmas Carol*.

The book is one of the most filmed adaptations of all time; there have been over 60 film and TV productions of *A Christmas Carol*. Personally, my two favorites have always been *Scrooged* with Bill Murray, and *The Muppet Christmas Carol*. There are not many ways to improve upon the Dickens book, but I think one way is to add Muppets.

On Christmas Eve, Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by three spirits, plus his dead partner Jacob Marley, who show Scrooge just how much life has to offer. He is warned to change his ways, or be doomed for all time. Jim Carrey plays Scrooge (and several other parts). Carrey has always been a versatile actor, but he really shines in this role. And as directed by Robert Zemeckis, the other big star of this re-telling is the “performance capture” animation.

First introduced in *The Polar Express*, and then last year’s *Beowulf*, performance capture allows an actor to dictate how an animated character moves and behaves. Actors wear a computerized suit to perform their role, and can then be placed into any setting. The technology has been getting better with each film, and the use of it here is beautiful. I would try to see this on the big screen for the animation, if for nothing else.

One of the things I like best in this re-telling is that Carrey, because of the animation, also plays the roles of the 3 spirits. Essentially, Scrooge’s own sub-conscience takes him on this journey. For the first time, we can see how this story could all be in Scrooge’s head, and that only he has the power to change himself.

I recommend this film to everyone, though I think kids could be scared by some sequences. Dealing with ghosts, even during the holiday season, can be a frightening experience for anyone.

And apart from the teenage vampire drama club, there are (believe it or not) some very interesting films coming out this holiday season. Among them to watch for (and we’ll review what we can right here at Movie Spin) is “Me & Orson Welles” (starring Zac Efron) about a teenage actor who lucks into a role in *Julius Caesar* as it’s being re-imagined by a brilliant, impetuous young director named... well, you know. And then there is the [The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus](#), starring Heath Ledger in his last film, directed by Monty Python great Terry Gilliam. And thanks to all who attended the Cape May Film Festival last weekend! It was a great success. Look for more reviews from the Festival in upcoming editions of Movie Spin.