

Scene & Heard

What to watch...

It was 1983 when 10-year old Ralphie Parker first begged everyone from his parents to a creepy shopping mall Santa for an Official Red Ryder Carbine-Action Two-Hundred-Shot Range Model Air Rifle. Their response was the same every time: "You'll shoot your eye out!" Twenty years have passed since Melinda Dillon first uttered one of the most famous lines ever to come from a Christmas movie mom, and after 20 years, it's safe to call "A Christmas Story" a classic. The list of timeless holiday movies includes some of Hollywood's most famous features. Everyone remembers seasonal staples such as "It's a Wonderful Life" and "A Christmas Carol." There is no doubt that director Bob Clark's "A Christmas Story" belongs alongside these films. Seldom do Hollywood movies connect with viewers on such a personal level. Alex Jennings, a senior political science major, said "A Christmas Story" has always been an essential part of his family's Christmas celebrations. "It's just a refreshing look at the holidays," Jennings' said. "It has the sentimental stuff, but it's also very funny." Family-First.com called "A Christmas Story" an entertaining movie that can easily be watched hundreds of times.

Musical Must-Haves

Sometimes, the only thing that can get one through the day is a good soundtrack. Music is great for shortening drives, walks around campus, or even driving the action of a bad Colin Farrell movie. The holidays are no different. Behind every great Christmas party, there's a great Christmas soundtrack. So fire up iTunes, Rhapsody or whatever ever it is you use to legally download MP3s, because this is the be all, end all, of Christmas CDs.

What Are You Doing New Year's Eve? – Harry Connick, Jr.
Famous for both his syrupy-smooth singing and easy-going nature, there's no doubt that Harry Connick, Jr. is at the head of the class as far as modern American jazz and big band are concerned. This 1993 remake of Frank Loesser's famous tune showcases why millions of Americans have fallen in love with "The Big Easy's" voice. Besides, it's great for making a move under the mistletoe.

Christmastime – Smashing Pumpkins

How does Smashing Pumpkins' lead singer Billy Corgan deserve a spot among crooners such as Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra? Despite being one of the founding fathers of American alternative music, Corgan and the Pumpkins succeeded in creating a sublime respite to those tired holiday songs we're all bombarded with this time of year.

Here Comes Santa Claus – Elvis Presley

"The King" was not only a master of rock, bluegrass and gospel music. He was also an accomplished Christmas crooner, recording a number holiday hits. One such smash was "Here Comes Santa Claus," a famous tune to which Elvis lent his distinctive charisma and unique rock 'n' roll style.

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer – Willie Nelson

No Christmas collection is complete without that special piece of Americana: country music. Texans have long since recognized the appeal of country music, and few singers affect audiences the way Fort Worth's own son Willie Nelson does. So kick up your boots, hang your cowboy hat on the doorknob, and listen to Willie put a Texas spin on a song you've heard a thousand times. You'll be glad you did.

Let it Snow! – Frank Sinatra

Nobody, but nobody, does Christmas like "Old Blue Eyes." Perfect for knocking back a glass of spicy eggnog, Sinatra's treatment of this holiday classic is one of the best Christmas songs ever recorded. It's as simple as that.

Baby It's Cold Outside – Dean Martin

Sinatra may have been Chairman of the Board, but Dean Martin was the king of cool. Written by famed composer Frank Loesser, Martin's version of "Baby It's Cold Outside" is easily the most hip, probably because one can't listen to Dino without picturing him posed next to a piano, tie undone and cocktail in hand.

The Christmas Song – Nat King Cole

Maybe you've never seen a chestnut, much less one roasting on an open fire. But thanks to Mel Tormé's "The Christmas Song," chestnuts will always be a symbol of the holidays. Though countless artists have recorded Tormé's timeless tune, Nat King Cole perfected what has become one of the most celebrated Christmas songs in American history.

Chanukah Song – Adam Sandler

Unlike many comedians, Adam Sandler has enjoyed success in movies, television, and music. Several of Sandler's singles were hits with American audiences, including "The Chanukah Song" from the 1996 release, "What the Hell Happened to Me?" Sandler describes the motivation behind the song on the track itself, when he explains its roots to a live audience. "There's a lot of Christmas songs out there, but not too many about Chanukah," Sandler explains. "So I wrote a song for all those nice little Jewish kids who don't get to hear any Chanukah songs."

I'll Be Home for Christmas – Bing Crosby

Those old enough to remember Bing Crosby know that he was considered by many to be the most influential media personality of the first 50 years of the 20th century. Many Americans also recognize Crosby as the man who perfected the art of popularizing Christmas carols, maybe none as much as "I'll Be Home for Christmas."

White Christmas – Tony Bennett

Before MTV's "Tony Bennett Unplugged" album went platinum in 1994, younger generations considered Bennett and his music a thing of the past. What many people didn't count on was Bennett's innate ability to connect with any audience, young or old. Couple that with his desire to simply "sing the best available songs the best way he knows how," and you have the recipe for one of the most successful vocalists in American history. Not only is "White Christmas" one of the best holiday songs out there, Bennett sings it the best way he or anyone else knows how.

By Marcus White



Unwrap the Holidays

THE BATTALION