



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Scrooge

Although there will always be dispute over which is Alastair Sim's finest screen performance, there's little doubt as to which is the best known. His 1951 characterisation of Charles Dickens' notorious curmudgeon Ebenezer Scrooge is not only generally regarded as definitive, but is also the only one of his films to achieve wide circulation in America, where it became a Christmas television perennial to rival *The Wizard of Oz*. There, it was known by the title of Dickens' original story *A Christmas Carol*, but in Britain it was named after the lead character.

And rightly so, because despite the stellar cast and a middle section where he is temporarily usurped by George Cole playing his younger self, this is Sim's film through and through. Clearly relishing the chance to play Scrooge as both villain and reformed hero, he takes an almost indecent delight in mocking the trappings of Christmas at every opportunity, shooing away carol singers and refusing to contribute to a fund for the poor. But after he's learned his lesson, he becomes almost childishly gleeful, dancing a little jig as he realises that he might actually enjoy living as a reformed character.

He's given ample support by an impressive supporting cast: Mervyn Johns and Hermione Baddeley as the downtrodden Cratchits, Michael Hordern as Scrooge's deceased partner Jacob Marley, Patrick Macnee as young Marley, Kathleen Harrison as Scrooge's Cockney housemaid, and a scene-stealing Ernest Thesiger as an over-eager undertaker. But the film's true voice of authority comes from Rona Anderson as Scrooge's fiancée Alice: in a crucial central scene, she bitterly rebukes him for favouring material wealth over love of his fellow man.

Casting aside, Brian Desmond-Hurst's production is competent rather than inspired, with little of the cinematic brio that David Lean brought to his Dickens films a few years earlier. But the Victorian London setting is effectively staged, alternating between a picture-postcard white Christmas to an altogether harsher impression, as homeless women clutch their children to their ragged bosoms. Not only does this implicitly rebuke Scrooge for his callousness, it reminds us of the reforming zeal underpinning Dickens' own work.

Michael Brooke, BFI Screenonline, screenonline.org.uk

SCROOGE

Directed by: Brian Desmond-Hurst
©: Renown Film Productions Ltd.
Production Company: Renown Pictures Corporation
Produced by: Brian Desmond-Hurst
Production Manager: Stanley Couzins
First Assistant Director: Denis O'Dell
Casting Director: Maude Spector
Adaptation and Screenplay by: Noel Langley
Adapted from A Christmas Carol by: Charles Dickens
Director of Photography: C. Pennington-Richards
Camera Operator: C. Cooney
Film Editor: Clive Donner
Art Director: Ralph Brinton
Mechanical Victorian Dolls Loaned by: Mr M. Steiner
Mechanical Toys Loaned by: Bracher and Partner
Costume Designer: Doris Lee
Costumes for Mr Sim/Mr Hordern/Miss Edwardes Designed by: Constance Da Pinna
Make-up Artist: Eric Carter
Hairstylist: Betty Lee
Musical Score by: Richard Addinsell
Conducted by: Muir Mathieson
Sound Recordist: W.H. Lindop
Studio: Nettlefold Studios (Walton-on-Thames)

uncredited
Associate Producer: Stanley Haynes
Continuity: Margaret Ryan
Focus Puller: Gerry Turpin
Clapper Loader: Tom Friswell
Stills: Richard Cantouris
Assistant Editor: Anne Barker
Set Dresser: Freda Pearson
Draughtsmen: T. Hopewell Ash, Edward Marshall
Sketch Artist: Patricia Neville
Property Buyer: Chris Chapman
Construction Manager: Wallis Smith
Assistant Costume Designer: Phyllis Dalton
Wardrobe Master: W. Walsh
Assistant Make-up: Aldo Manganaro
Assistant Hairdresser: June Robinson
Sound Camera Operator: Charles Earl
Boom Operator: Fred Ryan
Dubbing Editor: Leonard Trumm
Publicity Director: Hugh Findlay

Cast

Alastair Sim (*Ebenezer Scrooge*)
Kathleen Harrison (*Mrs Dilber*)
Mervyn Johns (*Bob Cratchit*)
Hermione Baddeley (*Mrs Cratchit*)
Michael Hordern (*Jacob Marley*)
George Cole (*Scrooge as a young man*)
John Charlesworth (*Peter Cratchit*)
Francis De Wolff (*the spirit of the present*)
Rona Anderson (*Alice, Scrooge's sweetheart*)
Carol Marsh (*Fan, Scrooge's sister*)
Brian Worth (*Fred, Scrooge's nephew*)
Miles Malleon (*Old Joe*)
Ernest Thesiger (*undertaker*)
Glyn Dearman (*Tiny Tim Cratchit*)
Michael Dolan (*the spirit of the past*)
Olga Edwardes (*Fred's wife*)
Roddy Hughes (*Mr Fezziwig*)
Hattie Jacques (*Mrs Fezziwig*)
Eleanor Summerfield (*Miss Flora*)
Louise Hampton (*laundress*)
C. Konarski (*the spirit of the future*)
Eliot Makeham (*Snedrig*)
Peter Bull (*first business man*)
Douglas Muir (*second business man*)
Noel Howlett (*first collector*)
Fred Johnson (*second collector*)
Henry Hewitt (*Rosebed*)
Hugh Dempster (*Groper*)
Maire O'Neill (*Alice's patient*)
Richard Pearson (*Mr Tupper*)
Patrick Macnee (*young Marley*)
Clifford Mollison (*Mr Wilkins*)
Jack Warner (*Mr Jorkins*)
David Hannaford

UK 1951©
87 mins

BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

The Apartment

Wed 1 Dec 18:00 (+ pre-recorded intro by critic and improviser Tara Judah); Mon 13 Dec 14:30; Wed 22 Dec 20:40; Tue 28 Dec 18:10; Thu 30 Dec 20:30

Remember the Night

Thu 2 Dec 14:30; Mon 27 Dec 13:00; Thu 30 Dec 18:00

Meet Me in St Louis

Fri 3 Dec 20:45; Sun 19 Dec 12:20; Wed 22 Dec 18:00; Tue 28 Dec 12:20

Miracle on 34th Street

Sat 4 Dec 15:50; Sat 11 Dec 18:00; Fri 17 Dec 14:30

A Christmas Tale (Un conte de Noël)

Sun 5 Dec 17:50; Tue 28 Dec 15:15

Scrooge (aka A Christmas Carol)

Mon 6 Dec 18:30; Thu 16 Dec 21:00; Fri 17 Dec 18:20; Sat 18 Dec 18:10; Sun 19 Dec 15:40; Mon 20 Dec 18:10; Tue 21 Dec 14:30

Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas

Tue 7 Dec 18:30; Sat 11 Dec 16:00; Tue 21 Dec 21:00; Thu 23 Dec 20:45

Gremlins

Wed 8 Dec 17:50 (+ intro by Justin Johnson, Lead Programmer); Sat 18 Dec 20:45; Wed 22 Dec 20:45; Wed 29 Dec 20:50

Bad Santa

Fri 10 Dec 20:45; Mon 13 Dec 20:50; Fri 17 Dec 21:00

It's a Wonderful Life

From Sun 12 Dec – Thu 23 Dec

Tokyo Godfathers (Tokyo goddofazazu)

Tue 14 Dec 20:45; Mon 20 Dec 20:45

Carol

Wed 15 Dec 17:50; Mon 27 Dec 18:00; Thu 30 Dec 14:20

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Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email prognotes@bfi.org.uk

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