

Vintage White



## Christmas Is All Around

By Kate Gilderdale  
Stouffville Free Press

Some people swear by *Miracle on 34th Street*, others say nothing can beat *It's a Wonderful Life* but for me, no movie says Christmas like *Love Actually*.

I've seen it so often I can quote whole chunks of it verbatim. Much of the 'plot' is preposterous (although I'm beginning to think Hugh Grant would make a better prime minister than some of the western world's present day leaders), but it's also delightfully risqué and laugh-out loud funny.

*Love Actually* was described by a Chicago Reader critic as "cloying, deceitful, and more or less irresistible". In other words, it's a shamelessly silly romantic comedy that makes sad, unsophisticated people like me laugh and cry and give thanks for the deliciously appalling Billy Mack (Bill Nighy) and his predilection for saying highly inappropriate things live on telly.

Above all, its sense of humour is unmistakably British, providing welcome evidence that globalization doesn't necessarily mean the loss of national quirks. The success of Billy Mack's hit single, *Christmas Is All Around*, would come as no surprise to any native born Brit, since the UK is renowned for sending hilariously bad songs hurtling to the top of the charts.

Among the evidence for the prosecution I give you *The Millennium Prayer* by Cliff Richard, *There's No One Quite Like Grandma* by the St. Winifred's School Choir, *Long Haired Lover from Liverpool* by Little Jimmy Osmond\*\* and *Remember You're A Wombles* by The Wombles.

Even British ads have a unique way with words. Back when I was living across the pond, the makers of Peek Frean baked goods came up with an immortal poster headline for one of their best selling products: 'Stuff the turkey, what about the Christmas pudding?' The shocked and appalled community didn't even blink. Then there was the ad for Vymura

Wallcoverings, which flogged its wares under the tag line 'Avoid ugly scenes in the bedroom'.

But I digress. Getting back to *Love Actually*, how could anyone not embrace a cast that includes Alan Rickman, Emma Thompson, Liam Neeson, Rowan Atkinson and Bad Santa himself, Billy Bob Thornton, playing no less a role than the President of the United States? Where else would you hear a Bay City Rollers song played at a funeral? And who wouldn't want Colin Firth for Christmas? Too bad the beautiful Aurelia got there first.

There are, of course, as many wonderful Christmas movies as there are excruciatingly awful seasonal songs. Who was it that decreed that every mall and department store across our beautiful continent must be forced to play an endless loop of ghastly ditties which inevitably includes *Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree*, *Here Comes Santa Claus*, *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer* and *Jingle Bell Rock*?

Everyone blames the uncertain economy for slowing retail sales. But what if people stay away from the aisles of big box stores at the most wonderful time of the year simply to avoid the audio equivalent of water boarding?

It makes you long for Billy Mack's decidedly raunchy adaptation of the Troggs' thumping dirge, *Love Is All Around*, if only for the opportunity to avoid the usual suspects.

If you really love Christmas, let it snow. And turn off the speakers so that we can all enjoy a beautiful, silent night.

"Where else but in Canada, for instance, would you find treasures like *Republic of Doyle*, *Rick Mercer* or *Corner Gas*?"

"He may be American but only in Britain could he manage to make a hit out of this dog's breakfast"

## Listen to a Life Essay contest helps build a legacy

Students from 8 to 18 are invited to participate in the Listen to a Life essay contest, which is part of the WS YOU 177 One Town, One Book project.

The 300 word essay will be based on an interview with a grandparent or friend of 50 years old and up, and will document that person's hopes and dreams, key life experiences and goals. The national grand prize is a Lenovo ThinkCentre computer, and local students are also eligible to win a \$500 gift certificate from a major electronics retailer, courtesy of Nurse Next Door.

"Generations are a living time perspective," said Susan Bosak, who heads the Legacy Project in Whitchurch-Stouffville. "This contest gives young people and older adults the motivation

to talk. Elders in our community can be a tremendous resource to enrich young lives and create a legacy on which to build the future."

The contest is also an opportunity to collect the life stories that make up local history. A special group of students will be chosen to interview the oldest citizen in Whitchurch-Stouffville, Melville Thomas, a 105-year-old resident at Parkview.

WSYOU 177 is a broad-based community collaborative that includes the Library, Legacy Project, local media, service clubs, faith-based groups, schools and seniors groups.

The essay contest deadline is March 31, 2015. For details visit [www.wsyou177.org](http://www.wsyou177.org) or call 905-640-8914.

## Ghost of Christmas Past



Free Press editor Kate Gilderdale (top) rides the Block Parent float in the Stouffville Santa Claus parade circa 1983.

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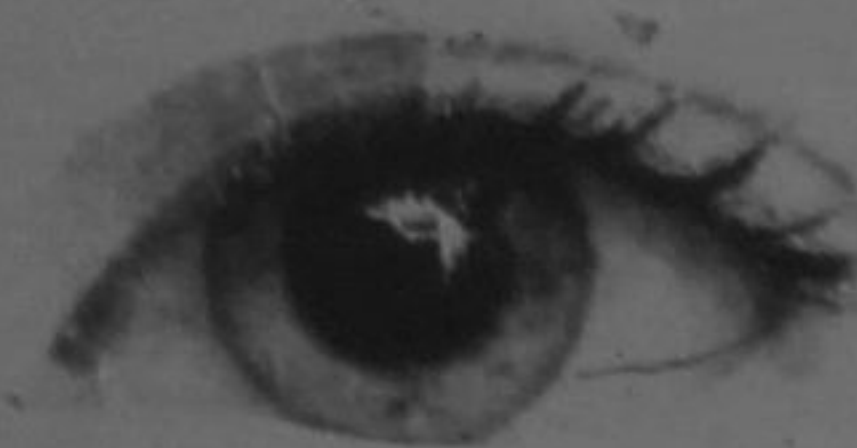
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