

Season's Greetings

With lost kids, dysfunctional families and too much food, the holidays have always been a perfect backdrop for comedy, drama and even action. Here's how some directors have celebrated the occasion.



CITY LIGHTS: (opposite) The Gotham Plaza set for Tim Burton's *Batman Returns* (1992) was based on the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree. It was built on Stage 16 on the Warner Bros. lot, one of Hollywood's biggest stages. (above) Bob Clark directs Peter Billingsley (who would later become a director himself) in the perennial *A Christmas Story* (1983). Filmed in Cleveland, Clark said he wanted the film to take place "amorphously [in the] late '30s or early '40s," but a specific year is never mentioned.





RUDOLPH AND FRIENDS: Reindeer borrowed from the Toronto Zoo get ready to fly Santa Claus (Tim Allen) over a rooftop as John Pasquin (left, in white shirt) prepares a scene from *The Santa Clause* (1994). This was Pasquin's first feature after directing Allen on the TV series *Home Improvement*.



STANDING TALL: Jon Favreau used forced perspective for many of the shots in *Elf* (2003) rather than CGI to make Buddy the Elf (Will Ferrell) appear much larger than the others. "We set out to make something that we knew, if we did our job right, could turn into a movie people would see year after year."



HIGH HOLIDAYS: Harold (John Cho) and Kumar (Kal Penn, on leave from his job at the White House) have a wild time in New York looking for the perfect Christmas tree in Todd Strauss-Schulson's *A Very Harold & Kumar 3D Christmas* (2011). The film required more than 400 special effects shots.



CHILLING OUT: Penny Marshall, with Denzel Washington and Whitney Houston, moved *The Preacher's Wife* (1996), a remake of the 1947 Christmas classic *The Bishop's Wife*, to Portland, Maine, for scenes at an ice skating rink. But unseasonably warm weather turned the ice to water.

PHOTOS: (TOP) WALT DISNEY CO./DORY; ATTLA/COURTESY THE KOBAL COLLECTION; (BOTTOM, LEFT) DARREN MICHAELS/WARNER BROS.; (BOTTOM, RIGHT) MARY EVANS/BUENA VISTA ENTERTAINMENT/RONALD GRANT/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION

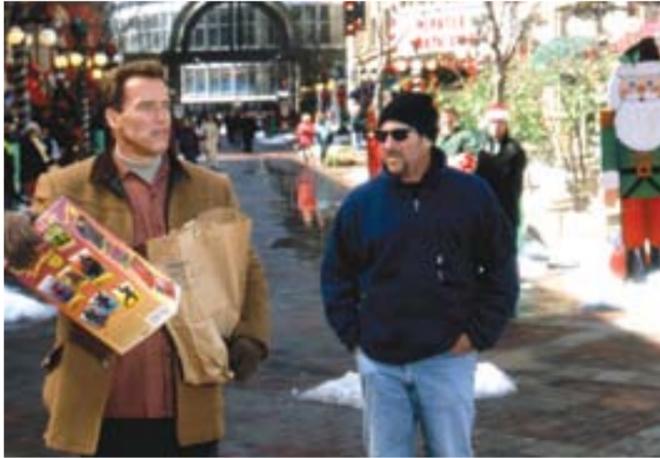
PHOTOS: (TOP) COURTESY NEW LINE CINEMA/PHOTOFEEST; (BOTTOM, LEFT) 20TH CENTURY FOX; (BOTTOM, RIGHT) BFI



ON HIS OWN: Macaulay Culkin is separated from his family again at Christmastime in Chris Columbus' *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York* (1992). A snow machine was used for some scenes, but a blizzard engulfed the set before the shoot, making this the only *Home Alone* film to feature real snow.



SPIRITED AWAY: Ronald Neame's *Scrooge* (1970), starring Albert Finney, was a musical version of the Dickens tale featuring 11 original songs. Neame transformed the Ghost of Christmas Past into a female role, played by Dame Edith Evans. The film was nominated for four Academy Awards.



CHRISTMAS SHOPPING: Brian Levant, with Arnold Schwarzenegger, staged parts of *Jingle All the Way* (1996) at the Mall of America in St. Paul, Minnesota. At times, Levant found filming “impossible” due to the scale and noise of the crowds watching production. It was then the largest production to film in the state.



REUNION: Malcolm D. Lee, directing Melissa De Sousa in *The Best Man Holiday* (2013), returned to characters he had created in *The Best Man* 14 years earlier. When the main characters sing “Can You Stand the Rain” to their female counterparts, their surprise is genuine as Lee didn’t tell them what the song would be.



HOME ALONE: Nancy Meyers (right) directs Kate Winslet in *The Holiday* (2006). She created a lived-in environment for two women who swap houses over Christmas. Principal photography began in Brentwood, where the Santa Ana winds luckily gave Meyers a winter day as warm as what the script called for.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS: Mark Sandrich (on crane) directs Fred Astaire and Virginia Dale in one of the production numbers from *Holiday Inn* (1942). The film was based on an idea by Irving Berlin, developed by Sandrich, celebrating American holidays. It was the first film in which Berlin’s “White Christmas” was used, sung by Bing Crosby.

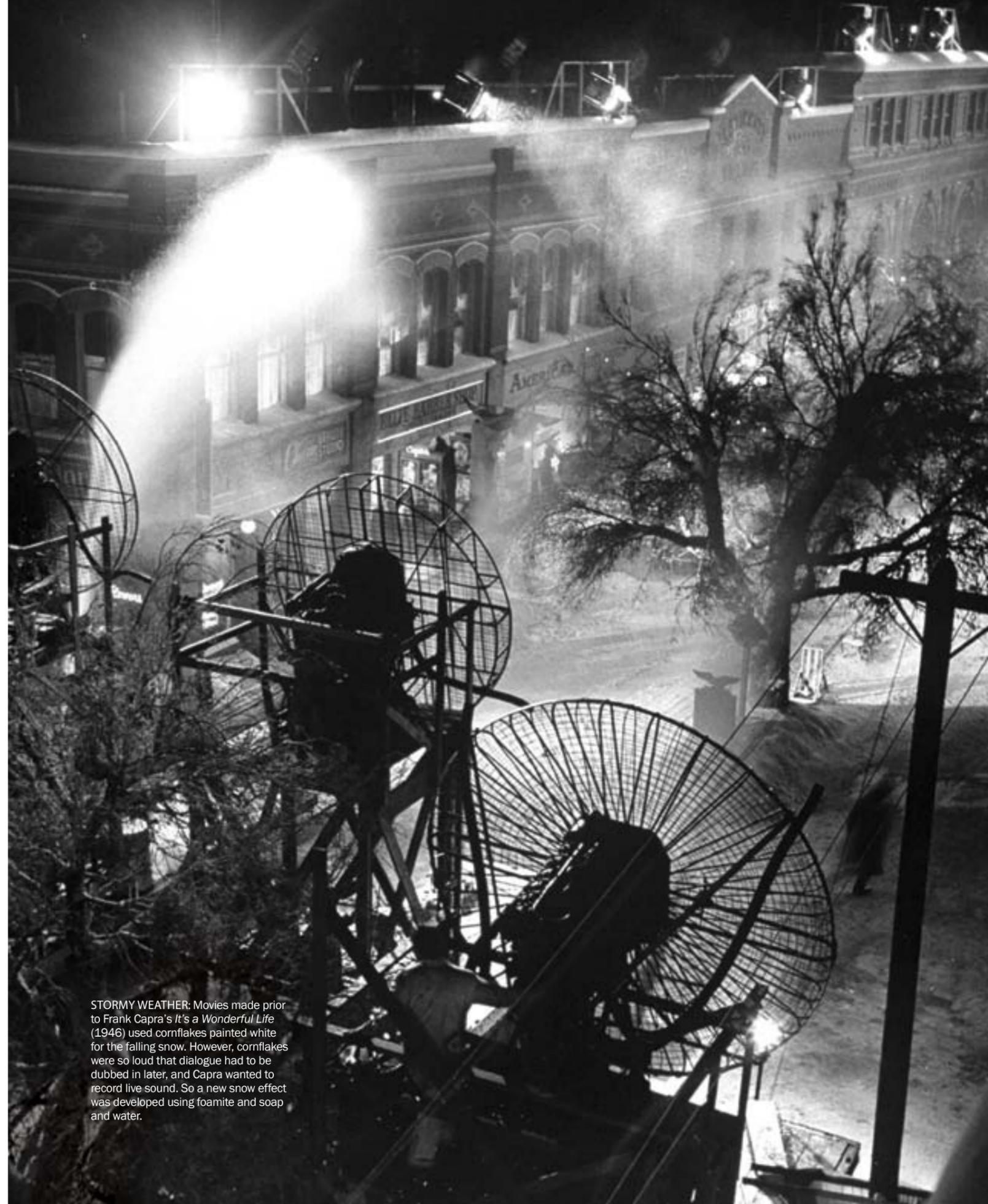


CALIFORNIA DREAMING: Nora Ephron's screwball comedy *Mixed Nuts* (1994), with Steve Martin and Adam Sandler takes place on Christmas Eve in Venice Beach. "Somehow, Christmas in Los Angeles immediately sets the movie [appropriately] off kilter. It has very low ambitions, as in low comedy. I just wanted people to laugh."



CRISSCROSS: One of the convergent story lines in Richard Curtis' *Love Actually* (2003) wraps up in a Marseille restaurant where Colin Firth proposes to his former housekeeper on Christmas Eve. Much of the film was shot on locations around London, including the opening and closing at Heathrow Airport.

PHOTOS: (TOP) TRISTAR PICTURES; (BOTTOM) UNIVERSAL PICTURES; (OPPOSITE) MARTHA HOLMES/TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES



STORMY WEATHER: Movies made prior to Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) used cornflakes painted white for the falling snow. However, cornflakes were so loud that dialogue had to be dubbed in later, and Capra wanted to record live sound. So a new snow effect was developed using foamite and soap and water.