

FILM



The Nativity Story



It's a Wonderful Life



Joyeux Noel



A Muppet Christmas Carol

Images: IMDB

Christmas Traditions

Christmas time can be a time for gatherings and there are many Christian films around to view and consider and some more secular ones that have Christian themes.

For a traditional telling of the real Christmas story, I recommend *The Nativity Story* (2006, PG). A wonderfully set and focussed production. I had an extensive review of this in an early ACC Catalyst (December 2007 – ‘The Meaning of Christmas in non-Christian times’).

For a lateral and perhaps different take for the younger generation, but

one that can inspire considerable discussion, *It's A Wonderful Life* (1943, PG). If it was made in Victoria today, it would be a very short film as the main character would have been euthanised for depression, but fortunately you can still watch the gem of a performance from my favourite actor Jimmy Stewart as he re-lives the gift of life.

And *Joyeux Noel* (2006, M)

More of an adult film given some of the themes, this Oscar Winner for Best Foreign Film in 2006, about a truce at Christmas is a surprising,

but topical film given our continuing look at events during the centenary of World War I.

And if you have a good deal of time on your hands, how about *A Christmas Carol*? According to Wikipedia, there are 45 film versions of the classic Dickens book, with most critics and Christian film groups rating the 1951 version the highest, though I believe *A Muppet Christmas Carol* (1992, G) provides a worthy and lateral competitor, and one that the whole family can sing along too.

Peter Bentley

Battle of the Sexes

I thought it would be helpful to provide a comment on this film, though I caution potential viewers as there is portrayal of active same-sex relationships. **Note that the film received a PG rating; a sign of the times!**

For those who are unfamiliar, it is mainly a dramatic re-telling of the off-court competition between tennis champions Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs (a No. 1 player in the 1940s) and then their actual match. I was interested in this film because of the Margaret Court connection. Australian



actress Jessica McNamee plays Margaret Court. The most intriguing aspect is the secondary story that involves Margaret Court, as she played the first ‘battle of the sexes’, the match in May 1973 that Bobby Riggs won 6-2, 6-1. Margaret continues as a character, but is primarily a foil for Billie Jean King.

Riggs continually taunted Billie Jean King with the idea of a major telecast deal, and a match was eventually arranged and held in September 1973. It was telecast with an estimated audience of 90 million, a

very large number for the day. Steve Carell as Bobby Riggs and Emma Stone as Billie Jean are simply amazing in their roles.

The film is certainly well made and a fascinating biopic of the 1970s and male and female relationships, but the obvious, though not unexpected aspect is that it is also a promotional film for same-sex relationships, and thus a revisionist interpretation that essentially mocks people in the era for being so narrow-minded. This is nowhere more evident in that the actual role that Margaret Court is assigned in the film is that of ‘lesbian spotter’, and her prime target depicted is Billie Jean King. It is a topical film given that Billie Jean King weighed in on the Margaret Court controversy over Margaret’s comments on same-sex marriage this year.

Peter Bentley