

## 4 Christmases

I shouldn't have liked it. It's an 82 minute comedy farce co-starring Reese Witherspoon – what's to like? But I actually enjoyed the movie [4 Christmases](#) more than I thought.

So why did I see it if I thought I'd hate it? For one, it was the only thing playing at the matinee price and for two, I had a sort of curiosity about the acting abilities of two country music super-stars: Dwight Yoakam and Tim McGraw. Actually, having seen Dwight Yoakam in [Sling Blade](#), I'm well aware of his acting skills. It was such a great performance in Sling Blade that I thought it was Oscar-worthy. He's not given much to work with in this movie however, and his role as one of those [Leap of Faith](#)-type preachers is not very well developed. I don't think it's any fault of Yoakam, though, but more a testament to the lazy script.

Vince Vaughn and Reese Witherspoon star as a freewheeling couple who don't see the need to marry since they're already happy, and they don't want kids. The first scenes of the movie really emphasize how perfect this couple's lives are, and it's almost sickeningly sweet how well they get along. Enter their extended families, and they become miserable people. It begins when their flight to Fiji is cancelled on Christmas and they are featured on the news. The couple (their names were not memorable) is now busted in their annual lie about travelling to some exotic location for charity work. They fib about this every year to their families so they can avoid seeing all 4 families (each set of parents is divorced) for Christmas. So now that they can't go to Fiji, they have to visit 4 sets of crazy relatives on one day and yada, yada, anticipated baby jokes and predictable chaos ensues, you get the picture.

For some reason, a lot of Hollywood stars agreed to be in this movie. And just as I expected, Vince Vaughn was the same in

this movie as the characters he always plays. He can be funny, but he's not very versatile. I was surprised that Reese Witherspoon did not get under my skin because for some reason, she annoys the heck out of me, and it's distracting when watching her in movies. As far as the country music super-stars are concerned, I consider this movie a waste of Dwight Yoakam's acting talent, and Tim McGraw was barely in the movie at all. I read somewhere that he beefed up for the role, and he was hard to recognize, although I don't really know why he bothered gaining all the weight for a part that hardly has him on camera and with barely any lines. Other big name actors making cameos were Mary Steenburgen, Jon Voight, Robert Duvall, and Sissy Spacek – maybe it's just me, but even though she's almost 60, I still look at her and see [Carrie](#) the fire-starting teen from the famous Stephen King horror movie of the '70's.

Overall, there was only one scene where I couldn't even watch because of its ludicrousness, so instead I turned to my husband and whispered, "This is unbelievably dumb". Other than that, I was entertained, and mostly because it was a holiday movie, it was fun to sit, watch, and eat popcorn. I wonder how [Christmas With The Kranks](#) will compare. I've heard that one is just awful, yet I want to see it since I read the John Grisham novel upon which it was based.

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## The Dark Knight

We ventured out to see the midnight showing of [The Dark Knight](#) last week, and I haven't written about it until now because I've been so busy, but I figured I better make some time for it before I forget, so here it goes...

It all began when we found out our little local theater would be showing it at midnight, and since we're usually up with the new baby at that time, we figured why not be in a movie feeding the baby instead of at home? So we got together a group who wanted to see it, and that's when we found out the movie was 2 hours and 40 minutes! Oops, the baby is never up THAT long but too late to back out now! Besides, after all the hype involved, I was actually looking forward to it.

Since almost a week has passed and I'm on little sleep, some of my memory of the details have faded, so this will be a very vague review. I'd have to say the movie was exactly what I was expecting. I was hoping it would be a little better, especially after all the media hype, but it was exactly what I thought it would be – and that's not anywhere NEAR the 9.6 people gave it on imdb.com. Since I'm not a huge fan of superhero / comic book movies (yet I keep going to see them; not sure what's up with that), I really wasn't expecting this to be one of my favorite movies ever. [Heath Ledger](#) did have a VERY good performance as the Joker, but was it Oscar-worthy? I personally don't think so. I do think he will win it though, but let's just wait and see if he is nominated and who he is up against. And it's not like I ever agree with who wins those things anyway; for me it's just a good excuse to throw a fun party ☐

But back to the movie... there was a lot of violence. I can't believe what they're allowed to call PG-13 these days. Although I suppose it wasn't really anything short of what you'd see on tv, and there was actually little to no blood and gore, so maybe that explains it. The children I saw in the theater were all asleep by the time the movie was over anyway. And yes, I did think the movie went on too long – it wasn't a short 2 hours and 40 minutes, and it didn't really fly by. As my husband pointed out, way too much dialogue for a superhero movie; friends agreed and added that the Batman movies are like that. I've only seen the Tim Burton [Batman](#)

from 1989, which I'm told is just a different take on the whole thing and doesn't really fit into the timeline anywhere, and I've also seen [Batman Forever](#), which I really enjoy. So that brings me to my 2nd favorite villian next to the Joker – Harvey “Two-Face” Dent. I just love what [Tommy Lee Jones](#) did with the character in Batman Forever, and I was pleased when I realized that Harvey Dent was going to turn into Two-Face in The Dark Knight, but overall I was disappointed because [Aaron Eckhart's](#) Two-Face was pretty lame compared to Jones'. The makeup was pretty good, although I actually enjoy the more comic book look that they gave Tommy Lee Jones versus the scary look they gave Eckhart for the newest film.

[Christian Bale's](#) Batman was alright, though I couldn't stand his gravelly Batman voice – it reminded me of the Friends episode where Joey is selling cologne at a department store... If you're a fan of the show and you know what episode I'm talking about, find it and listen to his cologne adversary say “Hombre?” – sounds just like Christian Bale's Batman and every time he spoke in the movie I was tempted to giggle as I thought of that hilarious Friends episode. [Maggie Gyllenhaal](#) was pretty good too; although in scenes with both her and Heath Ledger's Joker, it was weird for me to think that he played her brother's gay lover in [Brokeback Mountain](#), but that's Hollywood for you, it's cyclical.

And since we're on the subject of Heath Ledger's Joker, it was very impressive. Not the kind of movie or role I'd pick for being Oscar-worthy, but that's my personal opinion and like I said, we'll just see happens as Oscar time draws near. He was pretty scary, and I'd have to say Hollywood can mourn him as a good actor because when I was in the hospital less than a week ago, I watched [10 Things I Hate About You](#) (the hospital's limited cable selections + baby up at night = what else do I watch but this bad movie?). Ledger was in that movie, and he couldn't even shed his Australian accent back then! Seeing where he was in that movie versus the Joker did give me

appreciation for his work (as the Joker, not in 10 Things...).

And another reason I was excited to see this movie was that I had heard that 80% of it was shot in my former hometown (well, sort of, I grew up in the suburbs), Chicago. It was neat to see all the familiar landmarks, although they did try to anonymize the city so it could be recognized as Gotham City instead of Chicago. I was especially looking forward to the special effects involved in the Gotham City Hospital scene since I read an article about it ahead of time, but I have to say I was a little disappointed in how it actually looked on screen. I don't want to spoil anything for anyone who hasn't seen this movie yet, but I will say that the vacant Brach's Candy Factory on Chicago's west side doubled for the Gotham City Hospital. And seeing the Joker in a nurse's dress was pretty funny in itself...

Overall, I had a lot of fun seeing this movie. I think much of it had to do with the midnight showing and attending with a large group of friends. The movie was exactly what I expected, although I can say I was hoping for better... but again, I'm not a fan of comic books, and I've never read one in my life.