



Entertainment



Solutions for a Long Holiday

By Anne Zahran
Entertainment Editor

Ahhh... winter break. After the last final exam is administered, those of us without jobs and exciting travel time will undoubtedly be left with approximately four weeks of free time. Oh sure, the holiday festivities will take up a decent portion of those hours—trimming the tree, buying those last-minute gifts, and eating all those Christmas sweets, not to mention the hours spent catching up with friends and family over eggnog and fruitcake.

But unless your idea of a great holiday is watching hours of mindless holiday specials and sleeping until noon every day (okay, so maybe it's just not my idea of a great holiday), you may find yourself with too much time on your hands and not enough activities to fill it.

That said, for those of you non-holiday slackers, here is a list of fun (and entertaining!) activities to do over Christmas. These aren't real work either, but at least they'll keep your brain from completely atrophying from Dec. 6 to Jan. 9.

*Host a theme-movie party. You pick the theme, be it all movies starring Tom Cruise, all movies directed by Martin Scorsese, or even something as silly as all '80s movies. Think of the possibilities! Host after the holidays in order to bribe guests into eating your leftover goodies.

*Go to the public library and browse the latest best-sellers. Pick up and read the first book that looks interesting, whether it's an Oprah pick or the latest Jackie Collins. Quality is good but not necessary for a vacation read. Pick something you always wanted to read but thought was too trashy.

*Or... better yet, pick a book that you always wanted to read but thought was too hard/too long/pick a classic. In four weeks, you can read *Gone With the Wind*, *Les Misérables*, maybe even *War and Peace*. And then you can come back and brag to all your professors that you actually read it.

*Treat yourself to the best of the year's entertainment. Rent *Gladiator*, *Frequency*, or *The Perfect Storm* on video. Even if you've seen them once, these choice flicks deserve another view.

*In music, check out the return of U2 to guitar-based rock on one of the year's most critically acclaimed albums, "All That You Can't Leave Behind."

*Read the stunning *Drowning Ruth*, a haunting tale of how one woman's need to hide her past changed the lives of those close to her forever.

*Do something unexpected...the Cape Fear region offers plenty of entertainment choices hosted by churches, schools, and the Arts Council. Check the paper for listings, and then go see a play or visit an exhibit.

*For a complete list of what Amazon.com subscribers voted the Top 100 books, movies, and albums of all time, go to www.amazon.com. The list is a great starting place for broadening your mind and will surely provide enough choices to keep you entertained not just over the break, but for weeks, months, and maybe even years to come.

The Grinch: Warm and Winsome

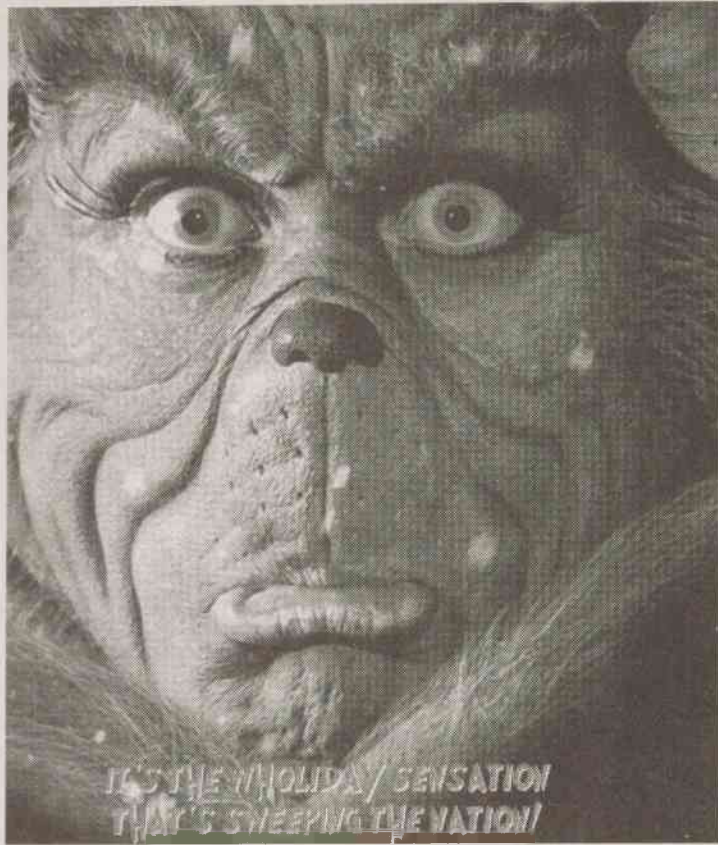
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It would be easy for me to blast Ron Howard's film adaptation of the Dr. Seuss Christmas classic, *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*. Too easy; namely because this movie is another vehicle for the multi-talented Jim Carrey, and if you don't care for the on-screen antics of his other movies, you probably aren't even going to like *The Grinch* any better. So, again, if you're not fond of the rubber-faced follies of Carrey, just spend your movie dollars elsewhere.

Also, I was somewhat disappointed in the lighthearted approach taken with this dark tale, which has so much potential to be really, truly scary. In the hands of another director (say, *Edward Scissorhands*' Tim Burton), *The Grinch* could have been more fully realized as a tortured recluse. Still, Howard's adaptation is appropriate for a more general viewing audience, and both his choice of actors and Carrey's incredible campy comedy make the movie accessible to all.

That said, let me continue with my review by singing the praises of one of the most talented and versatile comedians in Hollywood today. Carrey's *Grinch* is more delightfully sarcastic than wickedly sneering, and I doubt any one except for very young children will find his portrayal scary. In the hands of another actor, *The Grinch* could have been much darker and more evil, but Carrey suits this project, which was directed by Archie Cunningham himself, Ron Howard.

An estimated \$200 million dollars was spent in making this movie,



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and from beginning to end, it shows. The opening scene of *The Grinch*, which features a bird's eye view of Mt. Crumpit, looks as if it's been lifted straight from the pages of Seuss' book, and the rest of the film is both visually stunning and sensually stimulating. Whoville is a Christmas wonderland, complete with as many lights, toys, and characters as the eye can handle.

Howard has managed to con-

vey all the warmth of Seuss' Whoville and translate it to the screen, perhaps adding even more of his own. The costumes are colorful and elaborate, if sometimes laughable. And every Who down in Whoville comes equipped with a cute little nose resembling that of the Grinch's long-suffering dog, Max, and round little tummies full of Christmas treats.

In order to make the story feature-film length, the original tale had

to be expanded. Little Cindy Lou Who becomes more of a central figure than she was previously, and the actress shines in her first major role. Molly Shannon and Christine Baranski star as neighbors competing Martha Stewart-style for the most decadent Christmas displays. However, the most interesting plot diversion is the story behind *The Grinch*'s deep-rooted hate of all things Christmas. We learn just how the Grinch came to Whoville (and by the way, he was a pretty cute baby) and how an early childhood rejection shaped the rest of his life.

The Grinch's tale plays out the way we watched it on TV: the Grinch plans to "steal" Christmas from the Whos, taking all their presents, decorations, and therefore (he thinks) thwarting their holiday experience. While he does succeed in ridding them of the physical aspects of Christmas, he isn't able to rob them of the spirit of Christmas, for Christmas, as we all know, lies not in the gifts we receive but in the joy of family, friends, and love that surrounds us.

The Grinch does finally acknowledge this, but for those watching the movie, it's pretty obvious he knew it all along, though it was buried deep in his two-sizes-too-small heart. In the end, he gets the girl (Martha May Whovier, his childhood crush) and the gifts, and he is welcomed into the society he excluded himself from so many Christmases ago. And he even gets to carve the roast beast.

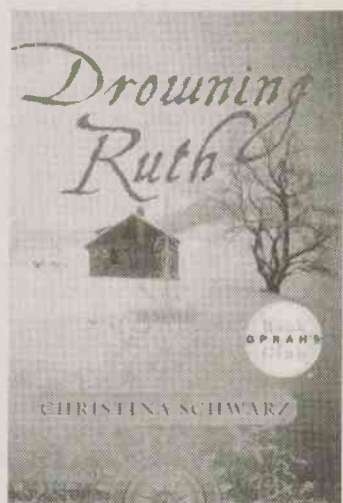
Drowning Ruth: A Tightly Woven Tale of Woe

By Anne Zahran
Entertainment Editor

Are you dreaming of a white Christmas, knowing all the while that if you stay in Fayetteville, your chances of seeing one are slim-to-none? Well, if you can't have one here, the least you can do for yourself is read Christina Schwarz's *Drowning Ruth*, which features enough wintry weather to make anyone want to curl up with a cup of hot chocolate and a warm blanket.

The novel is a vivid and gripping debut sure to keep you up until the last page is finished. It is the tale of Amanda and Mathilda, two sisters coming of age in WWI Wisconsin. The Starkey sisters are eight years apart and as different as two people can possibly be. Mathilda marries young and cares for her young daughter, Ruth, while her husband is off at war. Meanwhile, Amanda goes to nursing school and becomes entangled with a charming, wealthy, married man. When their affair ends, Amanda moves back home and makes valiant attempts to return to normalcy with unfavorable results.

Within a few months both her sister and her parents tragically die, and Amanda assumes the role of rearing her young niece Ruth until Ruth's father, Carl, returns from war. Amanda controls and manipulates



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Ruth, and the poor girl and her father are merely pawns in this desperate woman's schemes. Her need to be in control at all costs drives her to unimaginable lengths. One indiscretion is compounded by extenuating lies, and the aftermath negatively impacts all of the major characters.

I won't reveal how *Drowning Ruth* ends, but Schwarz brings all the major plot diversions together quite deftly. An astounding first effort from a talented young writer, this novel is great not just in itself, but in the promise it exudes.

Mazed™ "Santa Claus"

by Isaac Thayer



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Top 10 Christmas Movies Of All Time

By Anne Zahran
Entertainment Editor

*Disclaimer: This list does not include holiday specials broadcast on TV. As good as *How The Grinch Stole Christmas* and *Frosty the Snowman* are, our list focuses specifically on feature-length films. These are in no particular order.

1. *White Christmas*. One of the happiest movies you'll ever see, and a swell musical to boot. Stars Bing Crosby, Rosemary Clooney, and Danny Kaye.

2. *It's A Wonderful Life*. Call it sentimental, but this 1946 Capra masterpiece is not only one of the best Christmas films, it's one of the best films ever. Period.

3. *A Christmas Story*. All Ralphie wants is a Red Rider B. B. gun in this hilarious story of a young

boy's 1940s holiday.

4. *A Christmas Carol*. Although there are many versions of this classic tale (also, try *The Muppets' Christmas Carol* and *Mickey's Christmas Carol*) the 1951 Alastair Sim classic is the definitive, take-to-the-desert-island version.

5. *One Magic Christmas*. A modern spin on *It's A Wonderful Life*. Mary Steenburgen shines as a struggling mother who comes to appreciate Christmas through a series of near-tragedies.

6. *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*. A crazy squirrel, a turkey, and the usual antics of Chevy Chase make for another delightful comedy about the Griswalds.

7. *The Bishop's Wife*. Cary Grant stars as an angel sent to answer prayers and bring a bishop and his wife (Loretta Young) closer together.

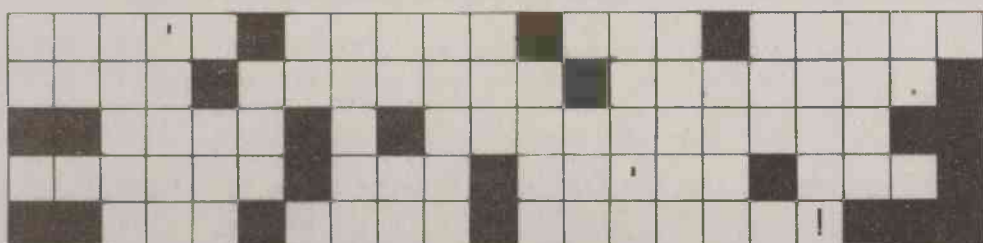
8. *Little Women*. In 1994, Gillian Armstrong directed an exquisitely detailed version of the bestselling children's book. A stellar cast, including Winona Ryder, Susan Sarandon, and Christian Bale, round out this wonderful family film.

9. *A Miracle on 34th Street*. Natalie Wood and Maureen O'Hara realistically portray a mother and daughter who don't believe in Santa Claus in this black-and-white December perennial.

10. *Home Alone*. Another great family film by John Hughes (he also directed *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*). Macaulay Culkin is a resourceful little boy who fends for himself when he is unexpectedly left behind at Christmas.

A REMINDER

Directions: Put letters back in grid and rebuild the puzzle.



N R D L
H S E L N D W E G E L T O N
D O I O V H D A I N E S A R I A G S E
T H Y V T E T A I S A S I S N A D R I V
D R I A U R O H I D K Y P N D N S E D E E