

Surprising Facts About 'It's A Wonderful Life'

by Salvo Lavis • December 23, 2009



For over 60 years, families have enjoyed Frank Capra's classic Christmas film "[It's a Wonderful Life](#)." Jimmy Stewart, as down-and-out banker George Bailey, learns the value of family and life's blessings through a "Christmas Miracle" in the small town of Bedford Falls.

On the internet it proves difficult to alter reality to impart life lessons. But we can transmit the gift of information. For you to learn more about "It's a Wonderful Life," here are five interesting tidbits about the film:

Dreaming of a White Christmas and a Silent Night

In movies of the 1940s, effects departments routinely used corn flakes painted white as snow. However, as actors walked through the "corn snow," the crunching of the flakes was so loud that dialogue couldn't be recorded.

Frank Capra wanted live dialogue in his snow scenes, so he called upon the effects department at RKO to create a new kind of artificial snow. The result: a new chemical snow, blown through a wind machine, for a truly silent night.

Not-So-Instant Classic

"Wonderful Life" flopped at the box office in 1946, not even recouping its production costs. As TV sets invaded America over the following 30 years, networks searched for Holiday programming-and "It's a Wonderful Life" proved perfect.

By the 70s, Jimmy Stewart's performance became a television fixture of the Holiday season. And now "It's a Wonderful Life" is nearly synonymous with Christmastime.

Good Things Come to Movies that Wait

Though "It's a Wonderful Life" received five Oscar nominations in 1946—including Best Actor, Best Director, and Best Picture—the film won none. William Wyler's "The Best Years of our Lives" took home Best Picture that year.

But true to its story, "Wonderful Life" lived to see a brighter day. In 1998 the American Film Institute released its ranking of the top 100 American films. "It's a Wonderful Life" placed at #11-ahead of "Best Years" by 26 spots. And now "Wonderful Life" also resides on [Yahoo's list of 100 Movies to See Before You Die](#).

First Time's the Charm

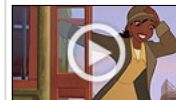
The famous scene in which Jimmy Stewart cries for help in the bar benefitted from some celluloid trickery. Stewart unleashed his best performance in the first take: the wrenching performance we see today. But the original shot was wide, not on Stewart in close-up.

So in post-production, editors enlarged each subsequent frame of the shot by hand. The result: a compelling zoom-in that brings us close to Jimmy Stewart in the film's pivotal emotional scene.

[View All](#)



'Invictus': Trailers and Clips (9 videos)



'The Princess and the Frog': Trailers and Clips (15 videos)



'The Lovely Bones': Trailers and Clips (8 videos)

[View All](#)

'Avatar' Movie Stills (37 photos)

'Invictus' Premiere Photos (19 photos)

'The Princess and the Frog' Movie Stills (40 photos)

'The Princess and the Frog' Premiere Photos (15 photos)

'The Lovely Bones' Movie Stills (5 photos)

'The Lovely Bones' Premiere Photos (5 photos)

"Life" Through the Years

Sure, "It's a Wonderful Life" became a media classic, having seen its way from film to TV, VHS, DVD, Blu-Ray, and the internet. But the movie has found rebirth in adaptation as well.

"Wonderful Film" was adapted twice for radio, with Jimmy Stewart playing his role. The 1970s TV movie "It Happened One Christmas" was a remake of "Wonderful Life." On stage, the film has become both a play and a musical. And homage to the film is boundless, with references on TV ("Saturday Night Live") and stage ("Rent").

One More Thing...

Finally, there's this factoid: "Every time a bell rings an angel gets his wings." Thanks, ZuZu Bailey.

Watch the Trailer for 'Disney's A Christmas Carol'

[See the Most Popular Holiday Movies >>](#)

[Holiday Movie Guide Home](#) | Movies By Date: [November](#) · [December](#) | Movies By Genre: [Action](#) · [Family](#) · [Comedy](#) · [Thriller](#) · [Drama](#) | [Top Holiday Movies](#)

[All Photo Galleries](#) | [All Video Playlists](#)

Copyright © 2008 Yahoo! Inc. All rights reserved. [Terms of Service](#) | [Copyright/IP Policy](#) | [Help](#)
NOTICE: We collect personal information on this site. To learn more about how we use your information, see our [Privacy Policy](#).

Tell us what you think about Yahoo! Movies - [Send us your feedback](#)

ed/chunked Thu Nov 19 16:43:57 PST 2009 -->