

Don't be a d--- this holiday season. On second thought?

by BROCK WEIR

The holiday rush is in full swing.

For some people, it can be a time of rush about to get everything checked off your Christmas buying list before the crowds in the stores get too bad.

For others, it's an early rush to get your turkey, ham, all the associated trimmings, or whatever your traditional holiday fare might be, before our stores are overwhelmed and their shelves understocked.

For others still, it's a time of doing some mental gymnastics trying to figure out how to get everywhere you need to be this holiday season, celebrating with the people you need to celebrate with, all without making it seem like well, a rush.

In short, it's the rushing season ? and it's important to make the most out of the eyes of the storm when you find them; otherwise, you risk the stressors overtaking you and becoming a d--- to all those around you. And who wants that?

You have to find our oases of calm wherever you can at this time of year and, for me, finding those pockets of serenity amid the sometimes-manufactured mayhem is one of the very things that puts me in the spirit of the season. More often than not, those quiet corners can often be found in a favourite holiday movie.

I know, this is hardly a ground-breaking observation, but we don't always need to break new ground in December; in fact, it's so often a matter of the tried, true, and indeed loved.

We all have our favourite films that put us in the yuletide mood, whether they're traditionally thought of as ?seasonal? or not.

?Meet Me in St. Louis?, for instance, is considered a Christmas classic for many reasons, not the least of which is Judy Garland's iconic rendition of ?Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas?, but that's only one small scene in a much longer slice-of-life movie that covers several seasons.

Our own favourites these days are probably most often watched at home with our loved ones, or even by ourselves, and we all derive some degree of comfort from it. At the same time, how wonderful it is to have the chance to watch a classic or two with others, even strangers, in a communal atmosphere?

As Christmas activities abound in our respective communities, I've been heartened to see a rise in the number of film screenings that have been included in the festivities.

Aurora, for instance, just wrapped its two-weekend Christmas market at Aurora Town Square and, as part of the action, market-goers had the opportunity to enjoy not one but two holiday classics with their neighbours: ?Home Alone? and ?Elf.?

As someone who saw ?Home Alone? in theatres when it was first released, it was clear at the time it was destined to be a classic, and it now has nostalgia on its side. How lucky for those of my generation to be able to share the big screen experience with the up-and-coming generation, particularly those for whom it will be a first viewing.

A lot of memories were made and I'd wager those kids who saw it for the first time this month will jump at the chance to do the same thing with their own kids when the time comes.

Here's to holiday traditions old and new!

Another favourite around this time of year is 'The Sound of Music' which, despite how often we continue to sing about Maria's favourite things at this time of year, whether or not we share her own Top 10 List, is a Christmas-free movie that has become inextricably linked with season.

I'm not going to object. In fact, one of my favourite Christmas memories of the last decade was a gathering of university friends at a traditional British-style pub in Toronto's east end, organized with the expressed purpose of attending a 'Sound of Music' sing-a-long over a nice roast beef dinner.

Girls in white dresses with blue satin sashes would have blanched at the very idea of singing at full tilt, between mouthfuls of mashed potatoes and Yorkshire pudding, but a good time was had by all!

And we're set to have a good time again this weekend, albeit without a roast to enjoy, taking in another non-holiday Holiday Classic: a sing-a-long 'Mary Poppins'.

Again, this is not something I'm going to object to; there's a very good reason for us to make the trek to the TIFF Bell Lightbox 'to celebrate the 100th birthday of the film's star, Dick Van Dyke.

Now, I've never met the man personally, but I see that as no barrier to making the most of the occasion 'he's a man in which we can all find inspiration.

While I've never met him, I did catch an extended glimpse of him a couple of years ago in Los Angeles when he was a tender 98-year-old. The occasion was to celebrate the opening of a photography exhibition of a dear friend of mine who, in the last decade or so, has happened to be Van Dyke's official photographer.

She has a unique knack for capturing all that is magical about this centenarian and that was evident for all to see 'including the subject, who attended the opening and spent nearly an hour on stage answering questions about his career, as well as their collaborative relationship.

The images were certainly striking, but every photo was underscored by the joy and vitality that was up there on the stage, a joy and vitality that was fuelled by curiosity, love, and even his complete inability to stay still.

In the lead up to his remarkable milestone, which will take place on Saturday, he shared a few words of wisdom with People Magazine.

'People say, 'What did you do right?' I don't know. I'm rather lazy. I've always thought that anger is one thing that eats up a person's insides 'and hate. And I never really was able to work up a feeling of hate. I think that is one of the chief things that kept me going. There were things I didn't like, people I don't like and disapprove of, but I never really was able to do a white heat kind of hate.

'What I left in the way of children's entertainment and children's music 'that's my legacy. I don't think remembering me is all that important. But it's the music, the music we leave behind. For as long as children are proudly belting out their new word, 'Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious' or skipping along to 'Chim Chim Cher-ee,' the most important part of me will always be alive.'

Dick Van Dyke might not have all that much to do with the Christmas season 'Halloween, by his own admission, is much more his holiday of choice 'but, as the stressors that come along with the season come at us fast and furious, we would all do well to consider the words he's given us in the lead-up to his milestone and embrace the fact that, inspired by him, sometimes it's okay to be a Dick!

Here's to Mr. Van Dyke, everything he represents, and the season of our lives he's inextricably become a part of!