



A Christmas Carol [VHS Tape] (1979) Alister Sim; Brian Desmond Hurst

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The 1951 version of "A Christmas Carol" comes down to the performance of Alastair Sim was a British actor who performed in many other films: "The Belles of St. Trinian's," "The Millionairess," and "The Ruling Class." In the minds of millions, Alister Sim is the definitive Scrooge of all time. This is not to diminish the rest of the cast. Michael Hordern is the match of Alec Guinness as Jacob Marley and his ghost, Hermione Baddeley is as fine a Mrs. Cratchit as we have ever seen, Francis De Wolff is a boisterous Ghost of Christmas Present, and Glyn Dearman is the perfect Tiny Tim. But we keep coming back to the point that Alastair Sim is Scrooge. This film is only 85 minutes long, but it covers the entire classical story by Charles Dickens. Screenwriter Noel Langley sticks close to the original (he would adapt "The Pickwick Papers" the following year), but tampering with the original text in this one is not advised. Director Brian Desmond Hurst's film is in black & white, but that hardly seems important (and colorization is a clear cut case of heresy) given C. Pennington-Richards's beautiful cinematography and Ralph Brinton's gorgeous art direction recreating old London town. But we keep coming back to Sim in a performance that sometimes has you wondering why anybody ever dared to essay the role again. Whether he is playing the heartless boss of Bob Crachit, the stingy miser who wants the poor to hurry up and die, the terrified old man confronting the ghost of his dead partner, the remorseful old man looking back at the happy days of his youth, the sobered figure looking at his own grave, or the giddy soul who keeps Christmas in his heart all the rest of the days of his life, he provides a definitive performance. You can enjoy many different versions of "A Christmas Carol," but this one remains extra special, and we all know who gets the credit.

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