

Rant-a Claus

Kris King – December 27th 2011

<http://www.rantinaminor.co.uk/2011/12/rant-a-claus/>

It would be very easy for me to talk this week about the death of Christopher Hitchens, and for that reason I'm not going to; everyone else will have said it far better than I and, besides, I'm sure he would have interjected at some point to ask for both an end to the fawning tributes, and as to whether someone could furnish him with directions to the bar. I could talk about how the morning after Hitchen's passing would also have been the 50th birthday of the late Mr. Bill Hicks, in whose honour this site is named, and how he, like Hitchens, has had a profound influence both on the way I see the world, and how I choose to write about it. But again, many others will have beaten me to the punch, and I don't like being repetitive (or repetitive). Therefore, rather than spending 3,000 words getting all sombre over the two fine names from my heroes list who sadly don't get to survive this season, I shall instead attempt to give you a more positive and upbeat christmas post that will hopefully provide some useful advice on how you yourselves can survive this traditionally stressful and treacherous holiday.

I will warn you, however, that this is not going to be the bog-standard, run-of-the-mill "Christmas Survival Guide" that gets trotted out every year by lazy fuck writers at magazines, newspapers, and the shitty sunday supplements; neither is it going to have much in common with the vapid, patently over-cheery festive features one usually sees throughout the last quarter of the year on ghastly shows like "Loose Women" or "This Morning" (to be fair, though, if you're watching ITV you deserve to suffer the crushing banality it regularly brings). No, this is going to be a unique and special sort of guide because it's my way of helping you (that is the *collective* "you" as well as the *individual* "you") to avoid all the things that could result in me, or anyone else of a similar, easily-frustrated persuasion, wanting to extricate your eyeballs with a couple of corn-cob holders before inserting them violently into your bottom with the aid of a camping mallet.

While I appreciate that it is, at least for this year, too late now for you to take heed of the message this post contains, it would still do you well to remember it for next year because it contains the kind of good, helpful advice that never ceases to be relevant. Like remembering to look both ways before crossing the road, or not smearing your naked body in fish-paste and climbing into the shark tank at the National Marine Aquarium, what follows is the the kind of wisdom that will serve you well for many a year and, hopefully, in time, bring a much better quality of christmas to everyone – well, except for Simon Cowell, *obviously*, who really needs to just fuck right off out of everyone's christmases and stop acting like he has an inalienable right to expect us to make his latest warbling meat bag's single number 1 every year. And, since we're on the subject ...

Get some new christmas songs

The creators of the "Now That's What I Call Music!" series need to die, and they cannot, in my view, do it soon or violently enough. Having inflicted thrice-annual compilation CDs (not including the end of year compilation CD which is basically a compilation of the compilations released that year) on us for an arse-munchingly horrible 29 years is, surely, enough to warrant paying to have someone skull-fuck them in the ears using a dildo wrapped in barbed-wire and hypodermic needles filled with Louis Walsh's own piss (an act to be referred in years to come as, "Now That's What I Call Poetic Justice!") ... but when you add to that the fact that they have been re-releasing their christmas compilation *every fucking year since 1985 with barely a single change in the tracklisting*, it becomes a cast-iron case for the death penalty. Being one of the most "popular" (or, at least, heavily advertised) compilations going, this means that the fucking thing has almost certainly been bought by every spud-brained wank-tard responsible for purchasing the festive compilation CD to play in their shop each year. I have, because of this, actually been able to accurately predict, on numerous occasions, the next track to be played in stores while christmas shopping – that's **not** healthy.

While the "Now!" producers must accept the blame for showing no originality and maximum cynicism when it comes to shoving a christmas compilation up the collective, bent-over arses of the British public every year, one does have to take a long, hard look at the material they've got to work with. If

we were completely honest we would be forced to admit that christmas songs are, almost without exception, utter shit. Trite, cliched, desperately cloying, sickly sentimental, mawkish, usually vapid, and artistically bankrupt in a way that most TV commercials would consider to be too crass and commercialised. Even the ones that aren't and are, instead, just a fun, knees-up celebration of family, friends, and frivolity, have grown painfully tired with having been incessantly repeated for the last four decades. I'm even bored with Slade's "Merry Xmas Everybody" (the song that was number 1 when I was born) having heard it in every shop, on every radio station, and on every bloody TV programme shown in December since 1973.

We need some new christmas songs, and I'm not talking about the vomit-inducing shite that most bands chuck out at some point during their pointless careers; the ballad with a few jingle bells attached that would make the woman it refers to not want to leave the protagonist at christmas (as she always seems to be doing in those songs) without having first inserted a few dozen razor blades into his larynx so the drippy fuck couldn't ever sing again. We need christmas songs that make you glad to be with those you love and appreciate what they mean to you, and songs that get you fired up for the day, for opening presents, and dancing like a pissed lunatic. If you want examples, check out the classic Phil Spector stuff, "White Wine In The Sun" by Tim Minchin, and "The Fairytale Of New York" by The Pogues and Kirsty MacColl. I swear, if anyone puts on "Last Christmas" by Wham, "Wonderful Christmastime" by Paul McCartney, or "Do They Know It's Christmas" by Band Aid, then I'm going to head down to the sea-front with a sack full of puppies and a brick.

Get some new christmas TV shows / movies / adverts

Every year we are treated to a festive cavalcade of entertainment in the form of christmas movies, christmas specials of TV shows, and adverts that exhort us to part with our money, either by plucking our heart-strings or by showing us how our holiday could be awesome and fun, just like these ordinary, normal, not-at-all am-dram rejects and D-list celebrities, if only we bought our entire christmas food intake from a supermarket that deals exclusively with frozen food (mmm, from the freezer to the table via the oven – what culinary heights you inspire us to, Iceland, thank you). The omni-directional shit-cannon that is christmas television, for example, usually represents a combined entertainment output of approximately 4 nanokays (a "kay" being the maximum number of seconds that can elapse while watching a smug, pudgy-faced comedian whose entire career is built on remembering things from his childhood, and asking if you remember them too, without wanting to stuff the walking pie-factory into an industrial mincer).

As soon as the last week or so of December rolls around, every sitcom, drama, comedy, reality show, soap, current affairs programme, magazine show, chat show, talk show, and continuity announcement gets a fucking "christmas special"; and they are, with very few exceptions, lazy, hastily-written, poorly-executed feeble concessions to the tawdry and desperate need of the networks to fill time without spending any money. Is this really the best we can do? How is it possible that "Father Ted" has produced probably one of the best christmas specials ever and that there really hasn't been anything to top it in the *fifteen years* since it was first aired – seriously, try and think of a better festive edition of a show that's been produced since – "The Office" (UK) was certainly satisfying, but it didn't have the sheer, feel-good, joyous christmas lunacy of "A Christmassy Ted".

When it comes to christmas movies, things are only slightly better (insofar as the word "better" has any real meaning in this comparison). Almost every christmas movie for decades has followed the same basic formula; either it's a grumpy bastard turns nice at christmas (i.e., a rip-off of "A Christmas Carol"), a neglectful/absent husband or father (it's almost always a guy) learns to reconnect with his family, or it's the movie that actually could be set at any time of the year and it wouldn't make a blind bit of difference because christmas had simply been forcibly rammed into the film's script-hole at the demands of a studio with nothing on its release schedule for the holiday season. In truth, some of the best christmas movies ever are ones in which christmas is merely an easily-replaced plot device ("Die Hard" and "Gremlins", for example), or those that have ripped off Dickens ("Scrooged" and "Muppets' Christmas Carol"); what sets them apart from the other shite shovelled into cinemas every year is that human beings made those movies, not marketing departments with boxes to tick.

Shut the fuck up about how organised you are

I'm normally an incredibly organised person; because of a mild list-making obsession I have never, *in my life*, gone away on holiday, for a weekend, or to some far-off appointment, and forgotten anything. Seriously; I have never forgotten to do, take, or otherwise prepare a single thing when going away. Christmas, on the other hand, is a completely different bucket of holly-decked lard.

Because my pay date varies slightly from month to month, because I'm perennially skint throughout most of the year (making saving virtually impossible), and because I never know whether I'm going to get a bonus until I actually get it, I can never really plan anything for christmas until about the last week before it happens. I can't buy anything, presents, food, *anything* until, at best, 10 days before, because I never know whether we'll have the money for it all. Until I'm able to save anything during the year, this won't change, and I'll be forced to see updates on Facebook from friends who are smugly announcing they've finished wrapping everything by December 3rd.

If you don't like the idea of seeing whether christmas tree baubles could be strung together and used as anal love-beads, fucking pack it in! We're not impressed – we find you smug and irritating. The worst criminals, however, have to be the people who have been buying presents throughout the year – the creepy weirdos who, while out shopping in mid-June will grab something off the shelf and say, "oh, that'll be perfect for so-and-so for christmas!", skilfully ignoring the fact that, by definition, it'll be something they really don't want because, if it was, they would buy it for themselves in the *six whole months* they've got before christmas actually arrives. I don't care that you've got every present bought, wrapped, and waiting with ill-deserved self-satisfaction under the tree for three whole weeks before it gets opened – that doesn't make you a superhero, that makes you a lunatic and an oddball. Normal people *like* to be mildly stressed by time constraints at christmas, whether they know it or not, because it forces them to be spontaneous and original with ideas. If you get a 3-pack of handkerchiefs, a complete guide to the history of creosote, or a selection of Chaucerian poetry fridge magnets for christmas, I'll bet you *any* money they were bought in mid-summer.

Oh, and the one group of people who *really* need to grow up and stop trying to impress us all are the yuletide Delias-in-waiting; the festive foodies who've been rehearsing christmas lunch since April the year before and have decided that they're going to have the whole family round and, using only one oven (with two barely adjustable shelves) and a gas hob with 3 working burners, is going to cook up a full christmas dinner for thirteen people, two of whom are vegetarian, one vegan, and one who's just a fussy little cunt who doesn't like anything except spaghetti shapes and mini-sausages on toast. Stop turning yourself into martyrs to aneurysm research and calm the fuck down. It's not necessary to get *that* stressed – everyone hates the big family meals anyway because it's time spent away from playing with their cool christmas shit. Do what we did; roast chicken, mash, red onion gravy, stuffing balls, and Yorkshire pudding, for just three people, all from scratch, and consumed with great joy at 11:15pm. No heart attack, no rushing around, no fuss.

Stop talking about the "real" meaning of christmas

Okay, now, in all fairness, you *knew* that I would have to bring religion into this at some point and subsequently ruin the christmas cheer I had thus far managed to build up with my veiled threats and unfettered whinging. There is little more tedious that one could encounter at this time of year than the self-righteous, sanctimonious, god-frotting dick-bag who tries to bring the festive mood of everyone down by introducing the subject of the "real" meaning of christmas (as if we were having some kind of make-believe fantasy holiday until they chipped in). It's not just because you know that all this Jesus-talk mellows out the delightful buzz brought on by a fat roast dinner, a handful of mince pies, christmas pudding, crisps, chocolate, some great prezzies, and half a bottle of scotch; if anything it's because Jesus, as my fellow nothing-worshippers will tell you (and as many christians seem to be blissfully ignorant or in denial over), has pretty much fuck all to do with christmas.

I'm not going to go off on a long and winding moan about where christmas really comes from – do your own research – but, as a quick summary: virtually every aspect of this holiday that christians think belongs to them has actually come from traditions dating back thousands of years before the supposed birth of their favourite sandal-wearing redeemer (and from such diverse groups of people as the Norse, the Romans, the Pagans, and the Persians). I just think it's sad that some people can be surrounded by friends and family, celebrating togetherness, eating good food, enjoying a drink, giving gifts, and just generally revelling in the fact that you've all made through it another year, and that you probably have each other to thank for it (either through their love and support or, as is more likely, staying the fuck out of your way), and all they can think about is the birth of some long-dead Palestinian they have never met, and are never going to. Shut up and celebrate your family, for fuck's sake.

Stop complaining about the "commercialisation" of christmas

This is one for people who have never really paused for a moment to think about the holiday they're celebrating and what it really means. While it may have begun in many cultures as a way to mark the passing of the old year and the dawn of the new, and that whole symbolism malarkey of the death and rebirth of life, it was also a time to enjoy the fruits of a year's work. The wine and beer

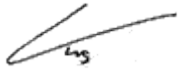
that had been brewing would be ready for consumption, the cattle one had been raising were ready for slaughtering (that and it made sense to feast on them rather than feeding them through a winter they might not survive anyway), and there were traditions of gift-giving for a good five thousand years before anyone had even heard of the middle-eastern carpenter's son. The whole point was to revel in the spoils of one's achievements thus far, to celebrate twelve months' worth of endeavour by sharing it with the people close to you who helped make it possible. It is, fundamentally, a commercial holiday.

In times past we would have raised the cattle, grown the food, brewed the drink, and made the gifts ourselves; these days, while we may instead take the *money* we have earned during the year and spend it on festivities, the principle remains the same. We take a break from our daily toil, have a massive blow out on food and booze, and we treat ourselves and others through the giving of shiny prezzies. As individuals, it is possibly our greatest contribution to the economy of our respective countries, helping to give it one last shot in the arm before everyone takes some well-deserved time off. Don't talk to me about tradition and how the commercialisation of the holiday is ruining it; traditions are ever-changing and evolving, as they should be, and the idea of christmas as a commercial holiday is a tradition older than most religious ones. Just think about the kind of holiday you would have if you removed all commercial aspects from it; no presents, a regular meal (the kind you have every day), no tree (unless one grows wild in your garden every year), no fancy decorations, and no cards.

Finally ...

Enjoy yourselves. Slap anyone who talks about how there's a "war on christmas"; *no there isn't* – if there is, it's those very fuckers trying to tell you someone wants to take the holiday away from you who are engaged in it (by telling people that someone is trying to take christmas away from them you are, ironically, taking *them* away from christmas – morons). Have fun. Get drunk. Stuff yourself with food. Play with your prezzies. Chill out. Give hugs to your friends and family. Treasure the time off work. Celebrate whatever you want to celebrate (just don't be a dick about it).

Look forward to the New Year and the future, whatever it may bring. Oh, and speaking of which ...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ang', written in a cursive style.