

A CALIFORNIA CHRISTMAS DOP BRAD RUSHING INTERVIEW ON THE FILM

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DATE : 29TH OF DECEMBER 2020



A California Christmas has been trending for quite some time on Netflix and since we are in middle of celebrating Christmas, The Movie Culture Interviews brings you a chat with Brad Rushing, the Cinematographer for [A California Christmas](#).

Brad Rushing is a Hollywood Cinematographer who has helmed quite a few projects over the years.

Greetings Mr. Brad Rushing, I'm Faizaan Mukadam and on behalf of The Movie Culture, we are thrilled to have you. We certainly hope you have a great Christmas planned ahead of you.

Q. Speaking of Christmas, I'd like to start the interview with you by asking about A California Christmas, how you got involved with the project?

Brad Rushing: I am fortunate to have several friends from different parts and times of my life working for ESX Productions. I have been part of the company's social circle for several years and have been invited to give feedback at test screenings of their films. I have always been impressed by the quality of ESX movies and how enjoyable they are. I am also good friends with director Shaun Piccinino. We have collaborated on some great projects. Shaun suggested me for DP on "A California Christmas." Since everybody already knew me they signed off quickly and I was offered the position.

Q. There are number of Christmas movies which come out every year. How important was it for you to have A California Christmas stand out?

Brad Rushing: I hope every project I photograph has an iconic identity, especially in a crowded genre like Christmas films. Whether a film strikes that chord involves so much more than just my small contribution of camera and lighting. The alchemy of the casting, actor chemistry, directing, editing, music, production design, costumes, makeup, sound and more has to coalesce and sparkle. For this film, from top to bottom, we had an extraordinary team who created magic which has taken the film to the #1 positions in the world and the U.S. today on Netflix. For my part I did not resort to any artifice or gimmick. My design was to compliment the actors, character motivations and locations in every scene to make the film as vibrantly authentic as possible.

Q. Speaking of Christmas themed movies, is there one which you love and watch every year?

Brad Rushing: Without question Richard Curtis' "Love Actually" is my most favorite Christmas movie. I love the ensemble format and how the characters all interconnect with and touch each other's lives in unexpected ways. Even after several viewings I was still discovering new revelations about who was connected to whom, and in what way. I am not a "crier." But this movie consistently makes me misty. The two subplots that get me choked up are the finale with the Sam and Joanna storyline and the finale of the Jamie and Auelia storyline. I shot a movie in Brazil once and I find the Portuguese language to be especially beautiful, so Aurelia is my favorite character in the movie! She is so sincere and sweet. I have to also give a nod to the classic Christmas specials from my childhood, "Charlie Brown Christmas," "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas," "Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer," "Santa Clause Is Coming To Town" and "The Year Without A Santa Claus." When I grew up in the late 1960s and early-to-mid 1970s those specials came on only once a year on one of the three network television stations. They were a big event which we eagerly anticipated and which heralded the holiday season. My mother made these viewings especially happy and memorable because she would bake us special cookie treats from family recipes, like her mother's oatmeal cookies. I have glorious childhood memories of Christmastime, those specials, and my Mom's cookies.

Q. As a DOP what attracts you to a project? Is there any key quality you look into?

Brad Rushing: First a good script. I learned long ago that no amount of amazing cinematography, talented actors, directors or editors can make up for an underlying crappy script. After that I want to see collaborators attached in front of and behind the camera who I know are talented, passionate, hard working and fun. Making a movie is a difficult and demanding job. You don't want to add to that challenge being undermined by inexperience or ego, or subjecting yourself and your crew to the misery of a tyrant 12 hour a day. Setting is always a bonus, as I love getting out of Los Angeles and living and working in fun new places. "A California Christmas" had all of these benefits. Lauren Swickard's script simply sublime. She, Josh and the other actors, like Ali Afshar, Amanda Detmer, David Del Rio, Natalia Mann, Gunnar Anderson and Katelyn Epperly simply light up the screen from beginning to end and are all ultimately good hearted, sympathetic people, even though there is plenty of dynamic conflict. Shaun is always a pleasure to work with and everyone else on the team made each day a joy. We collectively solved problems, moved mountains ... and had a terrific time.

Q. A Christmas themed movie should indeed feel like one through it's look. Could you tell us how you and director Piccinino figure that out?

Brad Rushing: We envisioned a romantic veneer for the movie, which fits nicely into the Christmas movie paradigm. But the only major overture to creating a specifically Christmas look was for the holiday party in the barn at the end. That location was a huge, empty space. Production Designer Michael Cooper did his best to fill it up with set design and some gorgeous hanging chandeliers. It still needed some Christmas magic and Shaun and I decided that a deep colored wash would best set the mood. We went with red, created in the wide shots with two Arri SkyPanel s60s and supplemented in closeups with Astera Titan tubes. Cooper also added in some nice, sparkly white Christmas lights for elegant luminous accents.

Q. A California Christmas topped the charts last week, which Piccinino also tweeted about. How must that feel like?

Brad Rushing: It is simultaneously thrilling, surreal, affirming and a little scary! It's a wonderful thing. The movie and team deserve the attention and accolades. It is gratifying that people enjoy the film, and many have singled out my work. At the same time I tend to be a bit of an introvert, so even while I am actively promoting the movie myself from time to time I feel a little overwhelmed by the whole thing.

Q. A California Christmas is getting rave reviews but do you normally pay attention to them?

Brad Rushing: This is kind of like the cookies in the cookie jar between snack time. You know they're there, and you really shouldn't go for them. But the promise of a tasty and rewarding treat can be irresistible. It's always nice when people get the movie and enjoy it. It's even okay when the ones who don't like it don't like it for the right reasons. What I mean by that is I shot a movie once called "Cook County" that I am very proud of. It is a dark, depressing story about people whose lives are destroyed by methamphetamine. When people say they hated the movie because the characters are reprehensible and the circumstances are scary and depressing I take that as a back-handed compliment because we did our jobs so well that the experience was visceral and repellent to them. In the case of "A California Christmas" everyone seems to love it. When I look through social media posts by myself, Shaun and others I am stunned by how many people have already seen the movie (only two days in) or who comment that they are watching "right now." It makes me happy that people are welcoming our wonderful film, which we created with so much passion and love, into their homes for the holidays.

Q. Growing up do you credit a Film for making you fall in love with Cinema?

Brad Rushing: Originally it was probably more television. Shows like "The Outer Limits," "The Twilight Zone," "Star Trek," "Mission Impossible," "Dark Shadows" and those Christmas shows. My Dad loved movies and would often let me stay up past my bedtime if I snuck out to sit beside his chair and watch old silent comedies, classic horror and sci fi, like "The Day The Earth Stood Still," "The Thing From Another World," "Nosferatu," or more then-recent movies like "Silent Running." One of the first movies I saw in a theater was "Young Frankenstein" which I went to with friends for one of our group's 10th birthday party. It was hilarious. When I saw the film again, many years later as an adult, it was hilarious for so many more reasons. The whole layer of grown-up humor that Mel Brooks hid in plain site was a joyful revelation to me. Imagine crafting a film so skillfully that it plays effectively on two completely different levels to two completely different audiences? In my teens "Star Wars" was a game changer and then came "Alien" which remains to this day my favorite movie of all time. There are of course so many others which influenced me, "2001: A Space Odyssey," "Being There," "La Cage Aux Folles," "My Dinner With Andre," "Koyanikaatsi" ... I could go on and on. LOL

Q. The Movie Culture is situated in India so have you watched any Bollywood film?

Brad Rushing: I have watched scenes from Bollywood films. But I have never seen one in its entirety. I have however shot a Hollywood feature film called "Divorce Invitation" with Telugu legend director MSP Srinivas Reddy. The line producer on that, Noel Vega, later recommended me for a terrific World War II movie directed by Shaun Piccinino!! That is how we met. This question offers me a priceless opportunity to tie those two events together.

Q. Do you have any future projects lined up which you'd like to share with us and your fans ?

Brad Rushing: Nothing I can talk about in detail. I did some filming in Baton Rouge this past October for a major franchise film reboot coming out in 2021. Shaun and I have some projects we are talking about including a sci fi idea of mine which we may develop together. There is a script about a fascinating historical figure from the 1800s that a writer friend is completing from an idea I brought to him. That is very different and exciting. I have a music video shooting soon, and believe it or not some of my original music that should be releasing in January.

Q. As a Cinematographer, is there a key advice which you give to DOPs in general trying to make it big derived from your experiences?

Brad Rushing: Shoot. Shoot all the time. Shoot for money. Shoot for free. Always try new things, be brave enough to shoot mistakes early on so you can learn from them and get them out of your system before you're being paid to shoot. We all make them, it's a natural part of the process. Accept the lessons you will learn from them. Learn from other peoples' mistakes too. Those are "freebies." Have a mentor. Have several mentors. It's valuable having multiple perspectives, because everyone's advice is subjective and the likelihood of any single person's advice always aligning with your experiences is remote. Have some variety which will allow you to choose the advice best seemingly suited to your particular situation. Take and apply the advice. If you don't your mentor will soon drop you. Also in applying the advice, if you do well, you become a de facto protégé and the mentor will take pride in you and your success. This can eventually lead to them offering you job opportunities and/or recommending you. Learn to edit. Every good DP needs to understand what is needed to make a cut work and what, if time is running short, might be sacrificed to make your day, or make your last shot before sunset. Networking is key. You must learn how to do it and always seek to improve. You can possess all of these other qualities and an abundance of talent and vision. But if you cannot meet, and impress people and maintain relationships over years you are destined for failure.

With this I'd like to wrap up with the interview questions. The Movie Culture would indeed like to thank you for agreeing to this wonderful interview.

THE MOVIE CULTURE SYNOPSIS

The Movie Culture couldn't be more excited to hear Brad Rushing working with Srinivas Ready as it strikes home with us.


Also it sure seems like Piccinino and Rushing have enjoyed their time working on A California Christmas and we can expect more stuff coming from their in the near future.

The Movie Culture also has a review up for A California Christmas which you should check out, the film is available on [Netflix](#).

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