

Exclusive Interview With Phil Morrison On *All Is Bright*

November 18, 2013 Alexander Lowe 0



I absolutely love Christmas. It's hands-down my favorite time of year and many of my favorite movies are set around the holidays. So naturally, I jump at the chance to see any Christmas movie I can, even when it's not full of elves and reindeer. One of this year's new holiday films, *All Is Bright*, definitely isn't filled with traditional cheer and goodwill, but it's still a quality, darker spin on a Christmas tale that features two great performances from its leads: Paul Giamatti and Paul Rudd.

Recently, in honor of the film's Blu-Ray release, I had the pleasure of talking with *All Is Bright* director Phil Morrison. During our exclusive, 1 on 1 chat, we discussed Christmas movies in general, setting this specific film at Christmas time, what working with Paul Giamatti and Paul Rudd was like, and much more.

Check out the full interview below and enjoy!

We Got This Covered: First of all, what's your favorite Christmas movie of all time?

Phil Morrison: There's one I've been thinking about a lot lately that I really like. I don't know if it's my favorite of all time, but I think it's one that's worth mentioning. It's *Holiday Affair*, with Robert Mitchum. It's really cool and odd. What happens in it is not especially heart-warming, at least on its face. It's Robert Mitchum and Janet Leigh and directed by a director that I don't really know at all. Don Hartman. I think he was just a very hardworking guy. The only other movie I can think of by him is that one with Cary Grant, *Every Girl Should Be Married*, which is a really hilarious movie because it's so politically backward. But *Holiday Affair* is really moving to me, and I recommend that everyone see it.

WGTC: What was it that drew you to this story?

Phil Morrison: What drew me was really relating to the circumstances of Dennis, Paul Giamatti's character. Being out of the blue declared illegitimate. Declared dead essentially, as he is, and being told you are a non-entity in the life that you understand and being forced to come to terms with that fact. But you can't just snap your fingers and be in another land. You still have to live within your own community. That was what was really intriguing about it to me.

WGTC: One of the things I felt was really cool about the movie is the fact that the story didn't necessarily have to take place at Christmas, it could've had a similar story set at another time. Did you specifically want to make a Christmas movie?

Phil Morrison: I'm glad you bring that up, because I think the idea of it being a Christmas movie, and being set among this Christmas tree sale was the original impetus for the writing of it. Paul Giamatti and his producing partners and Melissa James Gibson, who wrote it, all went

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to school together. They all pursued that together before I was ever involved. And then I think because Melissa has the point of view she has, the element of this former thief being disowned and declared dead by his own family became what it was about. So to her, those two things went together, for whatever reason.

And I agree with you, I think I would've been drawn into the story even without Christmas. Frankly, if it didn't take place at Christmas, it might be a movie that would be easier to grasp right away. So much of what it's about is counter to what the Christmas movie genre is expected to deliver. I think at the same time, a lot of its themes, or at least its central theme, which is about selfless giving in the end, does connect very, very directly to Christmas.

WGTC: With what you said about it not really being traditional, I noticed other than the Christmas trees and the one elf, there weren't many of the usual symbols you see in Christmas movies. You don't have the Santa on every corner. Was that a conscious decision?

Phil Morrison: I would've loved for there to have been a Santa Claus on every corner. This movie with a Santa Claus on every corner would've been awesome, but it was made for very little money in March and April. All of those symbols of Christmas that you're talking about, and it being a world of a beautiful New York City Christmas that these guys' circumstance has plopped them in the middle of is a movie I can only dream of, and I would've loved to have made, but it wasn't the one that the world was ready to let us make.

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