

# MIRACLE ON 34th STREET

**USA (1947)** 96 minutes

**Director:** George Seaton

**Cast:** Edmund Gwenn (Kris Kringle)  
Maureen O'Hara (Doris Walker)  
Natalie Wood (Susan Walker)  
John Payne (Fred Gailey)



**Screening 14th December 2022 at Swindon Arts Centre**

## Synopsis

Doris Walker, a no-nonsense Macy's executive, desperately searches for a new store Santa Claus. She hires Kris Kringle who insists that he's the real thing. But he has many sceptics like her and her six-year-old daughter, Susan. So, he goes to court to try and prove it. Is he the real Santa Claus?

## Reviews



The story takes place between Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day in New York City.

Although the movie was released in the summer, it became a box-office hit and ran in cinemas through the holiday season. Its legacy is such that it is regularly aired on television right after Macy's annual Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City, and the store has frequently decorated its windows during the Christmas season with displays based on the film.

The popularity of *Miracle on 34th Street* is due in part to the performances of Edmund Gwenn and 9-year-old Natalie Wood.

The story inspired several remakes, including a big-screen version released in 1994 that starred Richard Attenborough in the Kris Kringle role.

The film remains a perennial family favourite at Christmas time.

The film is set in the urban bustle of 1947 New York, where department stores compete for holiday crowds and harried professionals fight to stay on top of their jobs. Into this world of career advancement, commercialism and divorce strolls Kris Kringle, a jolly old man with a gentle voice, a snow-white beard, a twinkle in his eye, and his own Santa Claus suit. That's because he believes he is, in fact, Santa Claus.

What makes the film a genuine miracle of holiday film-making is the pitch-perfect balance of social cynicism and human generosity. The hearing becomes a good-natured parody of a celebrity trial, where the election-wary judge, the harried prosecutor, the uncomfortable witnesses—everyone but our heroes and the children of New York—behave out of pure self-interest. Who wants to rule that there is no Santa Claus? Yet the results are purely benevolent.

*Sean Axmaker, Stream on Demand*

## Film Facts

- Valentine Davies wrote the story for the movie in 1944 while serving in the U.S. Coast Guard. He had become disillusioned by the commercialisation of Christmas – and that was during the war years!
- He won one of the three Oscars the film garnered for 1947. His was for Best Original Story; George Seaton won the Oscar for Best Screenplay and the most recognised Oscar was that awarded to Edmund Gwenn for Best Supporting Actor.

*Lee Pfeiffer, Britannica*

