

## Scrooged ★★½

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**Year of Release:** 1988

Review by Randy Parker

**Country:** USA

**Verdict:** Skip It

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What do you get when you cross “A Christmas Carol” with *Ghostbusters*? The answer: a confused and overblown comedy with an identity crisis, such as director Richard Donner’s *Scrooged*. Although *Scrooged* aspires to be a modern day version of Charles Dickens’ classic tale, “A Christmas Carol,” the film seems as if it would rather be *Ghostbusters II*. The movie is overwrought with big-budget special effects that look good but add nothing to the story.

*Scrooged* stars Bill Murray as Frank Cross, the youngest network president in television history. Cross is a real S.O.B.; he is greedy, mean-spirited, and merciless. Following the general story line of Dickens’ novel, Cross encounters the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future, who give him a chance to reevaluate his life and change his ways.

Murray’s performance in *Scrooged* is adequate, but nothing special. He is fine when his role calls for humor. In the film’s dramatic scenes, however, Murray fails to give his character emotional conviction. Perhaps Donner is at fault for not pushing *Scrooged* far enough in any one direction. The movie never really decides whether it wants to be a dramatic, yet comic, re-telling of “A Christmas Carol” or an all-out slapstick parody of it. The film’s ambivalence prevents it from completely succeeding either dramatically or comedically.

Although *Scrooged* is fairly entertaining and funny, it is also extremely uneven. The drama, for the most part, is unconvincing and never catches fire. And throughout the film, the extravagant (but unnecessary) special effects distract from the story.

While Murray may be somewhat disappointing in his comeback role, the rest of the cast in *Scrooged* is magnificent; in fact, the supporting performances and the unending string of cameos are almost enough by themselves to make the film worthwhile. Robert Mitchum, Bobcat Goldthwait, and David Johansen are among the many actors who help to enliven *Scrooged*. Carol Kane almost steals the entire movie in her 25 minute sequence as the petite, but physically abusive, Ghost of Christmas Present. The cameos in *Scrooged* come fast and furious—so stay on your toes.

*Scrooged* is also worthwhile for its witty parody of television. The programming on Murray’s network yields some of the funniest moments in the entire movie.

Overall, *Scrooged* is a mixed bag. It does contain several rewarding performances and genuine laughs, but you have to pay for them by sitting through the movie’s failed drama, low humor, and pacing problems. *Scrooged* came close to winning me over, but ultimately its rewards just weren’t enough to compensate for its frustrations.