

# Of passion plays and parodies

## Consider these cinematic gospels of Easter according to Denys Arcand, Irving Berlin, Monty Python and others

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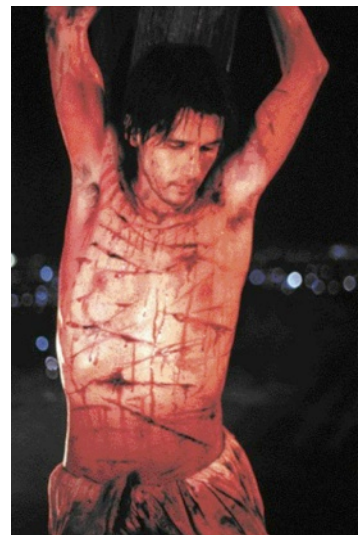
On this holiday weekend, a videophile's fancy turns to thoughts of great films on an Easter theme. From parades to parodies, Passion plays to portraits of Jesus Christ, these movies from the U.S., Canada, England and Russia are all worthy of resurrection in your DVD player.

**Easter Parade** (U.S., 1948) Fred Astaire grooms a new dancing partner, Judy Garland, in time for the 1912 Easter Parade in New York City. Great dancing, memorable tunes by Irving Berlin – Steppin' Out with My Baby, A Couple of Swells – and not a shred of old-time religion. Double your enjoyment with Warner's two-disc special edition.

**Monty Python's Life of Brian** (England, 1979) The Pythons insisted this was not about Jesus, *per se*, but really, who were they kidding? This story of a very reluctant messiah was probably the troupe's best-written farce. "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life," sung during the crucifixion, is priceless. Columbia Tri-star's release comes with an hour-long making-of documentary shot on location in Tunisia.

**Jésus de Montréal** (Canada/France, 1989) Québécois actors get into trouble staging an updated Passion play in Denys Arcand's Oscar-nominated drama. (Get the special-edition version from British distributor Arrow Film, available at amazon.uk; it's widescreen, unlike the mercilessly cropped Koch Lorber transfer sold in Canada.)

**The Miracle Maker: The Story of Jesus** (Russia/England, 2000) Ralph Fiennes is the voice of Jesus in this star-studded BBC animated feature. Made in Wales and Moscow, it uses 3D models to miraculous effect. Suitable for children, who will enjoy the animation as much as the story.



**King of Kings** (*U.S., 1961*) Filmed in Spain in glorious Technicolor, Nicholas Ray's epic of the life of Christ is narrated by Orson Welles and covers all the familiar ground from the Gospels. It's just under three hours long, but have a little faith; it's well acted and rarely drags.

Also available: **Whistle Down the Wind** (*Britain, 1961*) Hayley Mills plays a Lancashire farm girl who finds a fugitive hiding in the barn and is convinced he's Jesus. Alan Bates is the man on the run. A touching, highly moral tale the kids will like because it doesn't preach. Filmed in black and white and available on DVD only from Carlton, a British producer (try [amazon.uk](http://amazon.uk)).

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