

SCENE

FOOD MOVIES TV STYLE A&E HOME & GARDEN FEATURES CALENDAR COLUMNS CELEBRATIONS SEEN **WEEKEND**



Tulsa-shot 'So This is Christmas' feature film opens Sunday



While filming in a neighborhood in Tulsa, director Richard Foster (middle) goes over the script with his actors Lexi Ainsworth and Brian Massey before they shoot a scene for the movie "So This Is Christmas."
JAMES GIBBARD/Tulsa World File

By **NOUR HABIB** World Scene Writer
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The opening scene of "So This is Christmas" shows a downtown skyline in the background, with two ambulances rushing past in the dark, lights flashing.

That skyline is Tulsa's, and the ambulances were provided by the Broken Arrow Fire Department.

"So This is Christmas" is an independent feature-length film, directed by Tulsan Richard Foster and written and produced by him and his wife, Deborah Foster.

The movie was filmed in Tulsa last year, and local viewers will recognize many landmarks: Will Rogers High School, the Spotlight Theater and River Parks.

Filming in a mid-size city like Tulsa has made his movie more relatable to viewers, both in Tulsa and throughout the U.S., Richard Foster said.

"So often, I think, films are set in Los Angeles, New York or London or Paris," he said. "I really think that the average movie-goer doesn't live in New York or Los Angeles, and doesn't drive Porsches and Ferraris and live in high-rise condos that cost \$5 million.

"So, we wanted to show a realistic picture of real people in a real Anytown, USA, and Tulsa just fits that so well. Plus it hasn't been photographed that much, and it's a beautiful town to work in."

The movie follows the story of high school student Ashley, played by Oklahoma City native Lexi Ainsworth, who last year was nominated for a Daytime Emmy Award as outstanding young actress for her performances in "General Hospital." Ashley is part of a blended family, her father played by Eric Roberts ("Runaway Train," "The Dark Knight"), stepmother by Vivica A. Fox ("Independence Day," "Kill Bill, Vol. 1") and her stepbrother by Titus Makin Jr., whose roles include appearances on multiple "Glee" episodes.

With a family life that includes an always-critical stepmother and a stepbrother who is turning into a druggie, Ashley's own life begins to spiral into one filled with clubs, alcohol and shoplifting.

But then a handyman working on the family's house steps in and asks Ashley to help him with a Christmas play for underprivileged children, and her life begins to change.

The movie's title comes from the first line of John Lennon's "Happy Xmas (War is Over)," but Foster said it also refers to the fact that this is an unusual Christmas film.

"It's an unusual unveiling of what Christmas is about," he said.

Foster said the theme of the movie, as well of several scripts that he and his wife are considering for their next project, is choices and consequences.

"It's not what happens to you in life that defines you, it's how you respond to what happens," he said.

"So This is Christmas" is the Fosters' first feature film. The couple's production company made hundreds of commercials before they decided to dedicate their time to making this film, which took about three years to complete.

The film will be screened at Circle Cinema, 10 S. Lewis Ave., Sunday through Dec. 8. All proceeds will benefit the Circle Cinema Renovation Fund. Richard and Deborah Foster will attend all screenings and will be available for question-and-answer sessions.

'So This Is Christmas'

Circle Cinema, 10

S. Lewis Ave.

Screening times

Sunday: 5 and 7:30 p.m.

Monday: 5:20 p.m.

Tuesday: 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday: 5:20 p.m.

Thursday: 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 8: Noon

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Vivica A. Fox and Eric Roberts star in "So This Is Christmas" which was shot in Tulsa. Courtesy.