

POP CULTURE

A Christmas Gift of Peace



Joyeux Noël recounts the day war took a holiday

BRENDAN KELLY
THE GAZETTE

Christian Carion first began dreaming of making Joyeux Noël 14 years ago, when he read a chapter titled L'incroyable Noël de 1914 in the First World War history Batailles de Flandres et d'Artois 1914-1918.

But the real roots of this extraordinary film about a magical Christmas in the trenches of

France stretch even farther back for the French writer-director.

Carion's film – which opened in Montreal yesterday – tells the true story of Christmas Eve 1914, when French, Scottish and German soldiers called an impromptu ceasefire to fête Christmas together on the corpse-strewn no man's land between their trenches.

The film is already an enormous commercial success in France, is that country's official submission to the Oscars, and just landed a Golden

Globe nomination as best foreign-language film.

The little-known slice of history, an incident kept under wraps by military leaders at the time, struck a resonant chord with Carion because he grew up under the long shadow of that horrific European conflict.

"I was born right near the Canadian Vimy Memorial in the town of Vimy in the north of France," Carion said.

Please see NOËL, Page D2

DESIGN DAVID FITZPATRICK THE GAZETTE