

Holiday Special Report

Cablefax Daily™

Tuesday — November 3, 2015

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 26 / No. SPECIAL

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HALLMARK'S HOLIDAY SEASON IS BIGGER THAN EVER!

For Five Consecutive Years, Viewers Have Relied on Hallmark Channel and Hallmark Movies & Mysteries for Their Holiday Programming. In 2016, the Tradition Continues.

Countdown to Christmas



Most Wonderful
MOVIES
of Christmas

Hallmark
MOVIES & MYSTERIES

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MOST WONDERFUL MOVIES OF CHRISTMAS
ALL SEASON LONG**

CrownMedia
FAMILY NETWORKS

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Home for the Holidays? Turn on the TV...

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas. At least if you're a cable network that spends much of the year planning for a holiday programming extravaganza. While it's long been the standard that November and December are tent poles for holiday fare, Thanksgiving appears to be getting more attention than years past.

Hallmark Channel, whose Countdown to Christmas is in its fifth year, will for the first time premiere five original movies over Thanksgiving weekend. "It kind of occurred to us that just the way football is such a tradition over Thanksgiving and that weekend" so is family viewing of "heartwarming, emotional content," **Crown Media Family Networks** president/CEO *Bill Abbott* said. "While we are a tradition for people, we haven't necessarily been providing as much original content as we should [that weekend]."

With people staying home and cooking on Thanksgiving eve, it makes sense to have an original premiere they can watch between stirring, chopping and baking. Thanksgiving night has long been a favorite time to gather around the TV together. Then it just made sense to go into the rest of the weekend, Abbott said. The 5-day Thanksgiving lineup includes "Once Upon a Holiday," starring *Briana Evigan* as a royal princess who falls



Hallmark Channel's Northpole franchise returns with 'Northpole: Open for Christmas' (Nov 21, 8pm). Hallmark Card stores will feature an entire line of products tied to the movie.



Countdown to Christmas

17 All New Original Movie Premieres!
Every Saturday & Sunday 8/7
PLUS a Special 5-Night Thanksgiving Weekend Event.

This Year is Bigger Than Ever!





for a good Samaritan (Nov 25, 8pm) and "The 12 Gifts of Christmas," another holiday-themed love story this time featuring *Katrina Law* and *Aaron O'Connell* (Nov 26, 8pm).

Another Thanksgiving tradition for many is the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, and Hallmark Channel will be a part of that as well. For the first time ever, the network will have a float in the parade. Dubbed "Heartwarming Holiday Countdown," the 36-feet long, 30-feet tall float will feature a special live performance from a "very big musical guest," we're told. "I do think we are making some big statements around Countdown to Christmas and the success this franchise has had," said *Susanne McAvoy*, Crown Media evp, marketing, creative and communications.

UP TV is targeting Sundays and Thanksgiving weekend for its biggest premieres, according to evp, gm *Amy Winter*. The day after Turkey Day features "The Holder-ness Family Christmas Jammy Jam" special (Nov 27, 9pm)—known by many as the **YouTube** family that is famous for their Christmas video letter in their holiday PJs. It follows up that Sunday with original film "My One Christmas Wish," which tells the real-life story of *Jackie Turner* who decided to place an ad on **Craigslist** for a



Lifetime's 'Jim Henson's Turkey Hollow' kicks off its holiday slate, Nov 21, 8pm.

family for Christmas instead of spending another holiday alone. "Jackie Turner is a real inspiration in what she's been able to do in her life. She's really dedicated herself to helping others," which fits in with UP's "Uplift Someone" initiative, Winter said.

Lifetime is also cooking up something special for Thanksgiving with "Jim Henson's Turkey Hollow," a live-action, family-friendly film based on original characters and story written in 1968 by Jim Henson and writing partner *Jerry Juhl* (Nov 21, 8pm). The film actually revolves around Thanksgiving, but it's a lead-into "Lifetime's Very Merry Christmas." "Having a Thanksgiving movie around Thanksgiving time doesn't happen that often," said *Karen Griffenhagen*, senior creative director on air promotions for Lifetime. She thinks it will help set the network apart before it jumps into Christmas movies thereafter.

Jim Henson programming is also a part of **ABC Family's** "25 Days of Christmas," with the net returning specials "The Bells of Fraggle Rock" and "Emmet Otter's Jug-Band Christmas" to television after several years. As for the question on everyone's minds—yes, the network will continue to feature its 25 Days programming even after it rebrands from ABC Family to **Freeform** in January. "It's one of the biggest questions because it's such a huge part of the ABC Family brand and people know



UP presents the real-life story of Jackie Turner (Amber Riley), who offered to pay \$8 an hour for a family at Christmas in 'My One Christmas Wish,' Nov 29, 7&9pm ET.

Most Wonderful

MOVIES

Christmas

NON-STOP HOLIDAY MOVIES

NOW 'TIL CHRISTMAS

FEATURING NEW CLASSIC FAVORITES

PLUS 4 ALL NEW ORIGINAL MOVIE PREMIERES

Hallmark

MOVIES & MYSTERIES

in December you come to the network for your favorite holiday classics,” said ABC Family director of acquisitions *Megan Slaughter*. “25 Days will definitely be part of Freeform. It’s holiday classics that we love, and our fans look forward to every year.”

It’s not just about providing warm fuzzies to viewers. There are big ratings to be had. Last year’s “Christmas Under Wraps” starring *Candace Cameron Bure* on Hallmark Channel was the net’s most-watched telecast ever, with 5.8mIn viewers. Hallmark’s hoping Bure can do it again with this year’s “A Christmas Detour,” which premieres Nov 28. It’s tapped the actress to light the trees for a tree maze in New York City’s Herald Square that will attempt to break the Guinness World Record—yet another part of Hallmark’s mission to make a statement this year with Countdown. ABC Family scored big with last year’s 25 Days promotion helping it win the calendar year among women 18-34. The December-long promotion was the No. 1-rated month in network history last year among adults 18-49 (1.2mIn viewers).

With those types of successes, everyone’s upping the Christmas spirit. Hallmark will debut 18 original movies this year, 50% more than last year. Sister net **Hallmark Movies & Mysteries** will premiere four original holiday movies, up from two in 2014. Lifetime’s holiday fare grows to seven movies from five last year. It also marks the first time Lifetime has used the “Lifetime’s Very Merry Christmas” theme, previously opting to promote individual movies instead of itself as a holiday destination. UP will have its biggest year yet with 50 days and 500 hours of holiday programming under the “Everything You Love About Christmas” umbrella. ABC Family’s 25 Days jumps from 338 hours of programming last year to 434.

With more programmers getting into the holiday game, “it’s competitive to get the content,” said ABC Family’s Slaughter. “It becomes more challenging every year... It’s a very busy season for everyone.”

But the payoff can be huge. “I think it’s a different kind of year for viewing patterns, which plays to our advantage,” Hallmark’s Abbott said of the season. “Taking ownership of that is something that has been very exciting.”



Plans for Hallmark Channel's first-ever float in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Holiday Highlights

So many specials and original movies are planned this holiday season. Here are a few that will help you get into the holiday spirit:



“Murder She Baked: A Plum Pudding Mystery,” Hallmark Movies & Mysteries, Nov 22 (9pm ET): Alison Sweeney stars in this take on the Joanne Fluke book series featuring a baker-turned-sleuth.

“Becoming Santa,” Lifetime, Dec 12 (8pm): This holiday flick reunites “Family Ties” Michael Gross and Meredith Baxter as Mr and Mrs Claus.

“Toy Story” marathon, ABC Family, Dec 13 (starts at 4:30pm): ABC Family will present a back-to-back marathon, featuring all 3 Pixar movies as well as half-hour animated special “Toy Story that Time Forgot.”

“A Baby for Christmas,” UP, Dec 13 (7 & 9pm ET): The third installment of UP’s Chandler family Christmas movies features Marci (Malinda Williams) and Blair (Karon Riley) expecting a baby right before Christmas.

“A Christmas Melody,” Hallmark Channel, Dec 19 (8pm): Mariah Carey stars as a music teacher who helps a young girl write a song for the town’s Christmas variety show. It’s a pretty safe bet we’ll hear the superstar belt out a few songs herself.

