

## Tuned In: A live version of 'Christmas Story' airs on Fox

 [post-gazette.com/ae/tv-radio/2017/12/15/Tuned-In-A-live-version-of-Christmas-Story-airs-on-](http://post-gazette.com/ae/tv-radio/2017/12/15/Tuned-In-A-live-version-of-Christmas-Story-airs-on-)



BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. — Although it had a modest beginning, the theatrical release was a dud, “A Christmas Story” has become a holiday classic, thanks in part to TBS playing the 1983 film on a loop Christmas Eve into Christmas Day.

This year Fox stages a live production with “A Christmas Story Live!” (7-10 p.m. Sunday, WPGH).

Ralphie Parker (Andy Walken) will again dream of a Red Ryder BB gun while his mom (Maya Rudolph) and dad (Chris Diamantopoulos) listen to his wish list. Other actors featured in the production include Jane Krakowski, Ana Gasteyer, Ken Jeong, David Alan Grier and Matthew Broderick as the narrator. “A Christmas Story Live!” will be produced at the Warner Bros. lot in Burbank, Calif., where Fox staged last year’s “Grease Live!”

But viewers should not expect this new production to just be a live version of the movie. In 2011, the film was made into a Broadway show, “A Christmas Story: The Musical,” with songs by composers Justin Paul and Benj Pasek — better known for “La La Land” at the

movies and “Dear Evan Hansen” on Broadway — who returned to write some new songs for this live TV production of “A Christmas Story.”

“It was not just that it could be a wonderful movie, which it is. But on the stage, we can take the moments of Ralphie, the main character, his fantasies and his wild imagination and those are sort of screaming out to become musical numbers and to be realized on stage with choreography and production values that are very different from the classic film,” Mr. Paul said at an August Fox press conference during the Television Critics Association summer press tour.

This live TV production differs from past live TV musicals in a specific way: “A Christmas Story” is known much more as a film; the music from the Broadway iteration is not widely recognized. Regardless of how viewers react to the music, Mr. Pasek is well aware of viewer expectation for key scenes and bits of dialogue from the film that fans consider sacred moments.

“They know every scene that they’re excited to come in and see and how we’re going to be able to imagine it on stage and, here, how we’re going to be able to imagine it in a live TV event,” he said.

That will include a “You’ll Shoot Your Eye Out!” production number.

“It’s the culmination of Ralphie really, really feeling down and out,” Mr. Pasek said. “And it becomes a big number with tap-dancing kids, and it really is larger than life.”

And if “A Christmas Story Live!” disappoints, no worries: The original film kicks off its annual cable marathon at 8 p.m. on TBS Christmas Eve.

### **‘Neighborhood’ archive update**

This month marks nine years since Illinois high school guidance counselor Tim Lybarger started a blog that turned into the website [neighborhoodarchive.com](http://neighborhoodarchive.com), a comprehensive guide to “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood.”

Mr. Lybarger finished writing recaps of all the episodes in the series — almost 900 in all — last week.

Mr. Lybarger said he got started on the project — his wife calls it his “hobby that got out of hand” — when he searched for information on a “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” record and couldn’t find anything on it online.

“I thought, that’s a hole in the internet that needs to be filled,” Mr. Lybarger said. “The more I dug into [Fred Rogers’ work], the more I realized his message, his work, his career was more than just a children’s television show.”

Mr. Lybarger said he's taking a break from the site for the holidays, but he intends to add more elements, including character descriptions, location plans, cast bios and more in the new year.

### **WTAE changes digital channel**

Come Jan. 1 at 5 a.m., WTAE's second channel, 4.2, will no longer carry ThisTV and will switch to CoziTV.

CoziTV was previously carried on now-defunct local low-power station WEPA (Channel 59). Cozi features reruns of "Murder, She Wrote," "Frasier," "Columbo" and "The Nanny." Channel 4.2 will continue to carry WTAE news at 7 p.m. weekdays along with ACC college football and basketball.

### **Kept/canceled/rebooted**

HBO will bring back "Big Little Lies" for a second season; Netflix renewed "The Punisher" for a second season.

Two series that will return for their third seasons: "Berlin Station" (Epix) and "Victoria" (PBS's "Masterpiece"). And USA's "Mr. Robot" will return for season four.

HBO will bring back "Curb Your Enthusiasm" for a 10th season.

TV One canceled its daily, African-American focused newscast, "NewsOne Now," effective following the Dec. 21 installment.

CBS All Access will reboot "The Twilight Zone" with Jordan Peele ("Get Out") among the show's executive producers.

ABC canceled the "Great American Baking Show" after one episode following multiple sexual harassment allegations against one of the show's judges, Johnny Iuzzini.

PBS suspended distribution of Tavis Smiley's late-night talk show following sexual misconduct allegations against its host.

### **Channel surfing**

PBS's live-action educational series "Odd Squad," produced in Toronto by the South Side-based Fred Rogers Co., already turned out its first made-for-TV movie a few years ago. Now there's a second movie, "Odd Squad: World Turned Odd," coming to PBS at 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Jan. 15 on WQED-TV.

### **Tuned In online**

Today's TV Q&A column responds to questions about "The Good Fight," "One Day at a Time" and HGTV shows. This week's Tuned In Journal includes a post listing my Top 10 favorite series of 2017. Read online-only TV content at <http://communityvoices.post-gazette.com/arts-entertainment-living/tuned-in>.

This week's podcast includes conversation about the Golden Globe Awards TV nominations and "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel." Subscribe or listen to Pittsburgh Post-Gazette podcasts at iTunes or at <https://soundcloud.com/pittsburghpg>.

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