

## Actors Strike Over; Work Resumes

Pittsburgh's film and television production pros are gearing up for the post-strike era, reports Bill O'Driscoll for WESA-FM.

According to **SAG-AFTRA**, the new agreements "achieve more than \$1 billion in new compensation and benefit plan funding (including an additional \$317.2 million to the benefit plans)." They also "establish lengthy and detailed" rules regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in productions along with other issues addressed.

"This was an existential crisis, and I'm very glad that we've gotten some gains," O'Driscoll quotes actor Randy Kovitz, who is also vice president of SAG-AFTRA's local chapter.

Union president Fran Drescher and executive director Duncan Crabtree-Ireland posted online a celebratory message to members on November 16. The message points out highlights including:

- ◆ A new compensation stream for performers working in streaming.
- ◆ Two wage increases in the first year of the contract
- ◆ A nearly 43% increase to the benefit plan contribution cap for one-hour productions and a nearly 67% increase to the cap for half-hour productions.
- ◆ A nearly 43% increase to the benefit plan contribution cap for one-hour productions and a nearly 67% increase to the cap for half-hour productions.
- ◆ Informed consent and compensation for the creation and use of AI digital replicas of members, living and deceased,

Bill O'Driscoll also spoke with the **Pittsburgh Film Office's** Dawn Keezer about the return of work. [Read his full article here.](#)



## Frick Reschedules Exhibit

After its controversial cancellation, the **Frick Pittsburgh** has rescheduled a planned Islamic art exhibit.



The long-planned exhibit was pulled in response to the current conflict between the State of Israel and the violently militant group Hamas [see [Pittsburgh Applause November 2023 page 4](#) – ed.] However, WESA-FM's Cindi Lash reports that the Frick will now stage "Treasured Ornament: 10 Centuries of Islamic Art" in August 2024.

Many local Muslim and Jewish leaders disagreed with the cancellation which itself caused controversy. The local chapter of the **Council on American-Islamic Relations** (CAIR) posted on their web site that says the decision

"perpetuates the harmful stereotype that Muslims or Islamic art are synonymous with terrorism or antisemitism. This false perspective not only disregards the vast and diverse Islamic world." In a separate report, WESA-FM's Bill O'Driscoll quotes spokesman for the **Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh**: "I believe that few people in the Jewish community would have been concerned about an exhibit on Islamic art, because we understand that has nothing to do with Hamas, which is a terrorist organization."

"The Frick is devastated to have hurt neighbors we deeply," Lash draws from an official museum statement. "We will work earnestly to repair our relationships with the Muslim community." Read her article by [clicking here](#).

## That Other Frick

With more than 80% of its fundraising goal achieved, New York City's **Frick Collection** is on schedule for its 2024 reopening. The news was reported by Torey Akers for the *Art Newspaper*.

Established in 1935, the Frick Collection is a world-class art museum situated in the former Manhattan home of Pittsburgh industrialist Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919). It is the independent sister of Frick **Pittsburgh**, which is focused on Frick's local mansion called Clayton.

Akers describes the project as "the first comprehensive upgrade of the Frick's facilities in almost 90 years." The \$290 million effort is detailed [in this article](#).



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## Will Musicians Walk Next?

The writers and actors have settled matters with the producers and studios. But another group has yet to reach a deal: musicians.



In early November, the **American Federation of Musicians** (AFM) announced that a date has been set to begin negotiating a new deal with the **Alliance of Motion Picture and Television** (AMPTP).

“Streaming now dominates the entertainment industry,” the union says in a press release, explaining that “‘new media’ is no longer a new business. The AMPTP has unfairly exploited

musicians’ labor and shut musicians out of millions of dollars of streaming profits for over a decade. It’s past time for a fair contract for current and future generations of all musicians.”

The current contract was due to expire on November 13, but has been temporarily extended. Negotiations begin January 22. More information on the union’s position is available by clicking [here](#).



## Iris Declares “Cancer Gone”

Iconic and beloved local singer Donnie Iris has beaten cancer, reports Eric Heyl for Patch Pittsburgh.

Born Dominic Ieace in 1943, he has been entertaining audiences since the 1960’s. His peak period was in the 1980’s. This is the era when Donnie and his band, the Cruisers, packed concert halls and saw five albums make *Billboard* magazine’s chart of high-selling records.

Heyl quotes a post on the band’s happily declaring “doctors do not see any more cancer. Such great news! He feels like singing!”

Read the full [article here](#).

## Post-Gazette Strike Ensnarls Other Reporters

The long-running labor dispute at **Block Communications** has pulled in another news organization, reports the *Washington Post* and MediaPost.com.

That news organization is the nonprofit



**ProPublica**, which specializes in investigative journalism. With a national staff of less than 150 people, the organization routinely partners with other entities for its reporting. One of these is the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* --- something that is not sitting well with the recently unionized ProPublica.

Current joint projects include an investigation into breathing machines manufactured by [Philips Respironics](#). There have been thousands of complaints involving faulty equipment.

In June of this year, staff members at the nonprofit created the **ProPublica Guild** to represent them “with 90% support across the business and editorial sides of the newsroom.” ProPublica voluntarily recognized the guild less than two months later. The union charges that “ProPublica is helping the newspaper’s management endure the strike,” according to the *Washington Post*’s Will Sommer.

Ray Schultz comments on the situation for MediaPost. More on the union is available by [clicking here](#).



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## Local Amazon Project In Pre-Prod

Pre-production has begun on the new **Amazon** series “Motorheads”



The only location information made public identifies Toronto for the series. However, the log-line indicates a Pennsylvania town as the setting and Amazon has produced multiple projects in Pittsburgh.

An Amazon press release describes “Motorheads” as “a gripping story, anchored around the series of ‘firsts’ that accompany young adulthood.” Ryane Phillippe has been cast in the lead.

In related news, Amazon has run afoul of the **Writers Guild of America West** (WGAW) just weeks after the writers’ strike ended. Katie Campione of Deadline.com reports that the union claims that the streamer “has yet to reconvene writers rooms for several shows that were already underway before the work stoppage earlier this year.” WGAW says that this failure is a violation of the new contract.



Channel  
Pittsburgh



## CMU’s New Art Center

On November 13, **Carnegie Mellon University** (CMU) unveiled the design for its forthcoming Institute for Contemporary Art Pittsburgh (ICA).

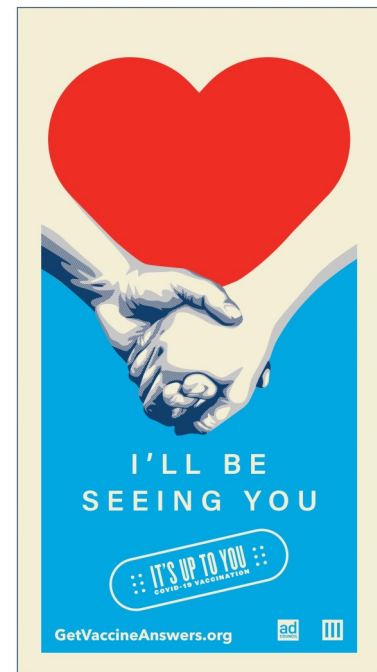
### Carnegie Mellon University

The project expands and rechristens the university’s Miller Institute for Contemporary Art. It will be the “civic and cultural anchor” of the new 342,000-square-foot Richard King Mellon Hall of Sciences being designed by ZGF Architects. A press release describes the complex “as a two-part structure: the loop where the building reaches out to the Pittsburgh community and houses the ICA Pittsburgh, as well as other public and university spaces; and the tower, where both the Mellon College of Science and School of Computer Science academic and research facilities will be located. The massing and distinctive facades of the loop and the tower create a dynamic and interactive experience of the structure, depending on the angle from which it is approached.” The loop is to echo the look of the thistle, the national flower of Scotland. The university’s founder, steel magnate Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) was born in Scotland.

CMU’s announcement goes on to explain that visitors “will approach the building through a public plaza, shared with the Carnegie Museum

of Art, whose northeast entrance lies directly across from the loop. Enhanced with public art commissions, this new civic space extends the cultural corridor of Forbes Avenue and welcomes students, residents and visitors of Pittsburgh the opportunity to experience a full spectrum of artistic expression.”

Construction is set to begin in the spring of 2024.



SOURCED VIA

IMDb

According to the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) among other sources, the following will be shooting locally in 2024:

**“Mayor of Kingstown”**

101 Studios  
335 North Maple Drive Suite 340  
Beverly Hills, CA 90210  
(424) 288-0900  
Producers: Hugh Dillon & Taylor Sheridan  
Primary Writers: Hugh Dillon & Taylor Sheridan  
Directors: Various

**“Motorheads”**

Amazon MGM Studios  
Producer: John A. Norris

**“American Rust,**  
Boat Rocket Studios  
310 King Street East  
Toronto, ON M5A 1K6  
(416) 591-0065  
Producer: Dan Futterman  
Writers: Various  
Directors: Various

**Untitled Sammy Davis Jr. Bio**

Lee Daniels Entertainment  
2029 Century Park East Suite  
1500  
Los Angeles, CA 90067  
(310) 969-4630  
Producers: Lee Daniels, Thomas Westfall & Marc Toberoff



IMDb also reports the following films are in development with the expectation that at least some shooting will occur in the Pittsburgh area.

**“Glimmer”**

DreamWorks  
100 Universal City Plaza  
Universal City, CA 91608  
(818) 733-7000  
Producers: Adam Kolbrenner & Mark Sourian  
Writer: Carter Blanchard  
Director: Ringan Ledwidge

**“Heart in Pieces”**

3 Men and a Lady Productions  
PO Box 79041  
Pittsburgh, PA 15216  
(757) 895-2850  
Producers: Natalie Peri & Natalie Tyler  
Writer: Natalie Tyler  
Director: Natalie Peri

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## Images



*The internationally acclaimed violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter celebrates her 60th birthday this month in a special concert with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.*

# The Strikes: Was Jim Richards Right?



In the August 2023 issue of *Pittsburgh Applause*, publisher and editor James A. Richards offered his opinions and predictions relating to the dual strikes.



## **STREAMING IS BEING OVERVALUED**

Jim pointed out that “having millions of subscribers or members is no guarantee of financial success” adding that “streaming is expensive for consumers as well as for creators. \$9.95 a month doesn’t sound like much, until you find yourself subscribing to multiple services.”

**His Prediction:** Streaming is simply becoming part of the entertainment mix. “The content will be dominated by vintage material. Most new productions will be low-cost reality shows and documentaries. They will be supplemented by some marquee scripted programs delivered in short runs.”

**What Has Happened:** Stephen Lovely, editor of the blog CordCutting.com posted an analysis early this year pointing out that streaming video platforms “now struggle with their business models. Faced with fickle consumers, soaring production costs, and a diluted market beset by mooching, 2023 is shaping up as an industry inflection point.” A survey conducted by the blog reports that “more than one in four [streaming consumers] plans to cancel at least one of their subscriptions this year. Forty-four percent said they’re canceling due to a lack of interesting content.” A good example is Paramount+ which, despite reaching 63 million subscribers, has cost its parent company hundreds of millions of dollars in losses. Streamers have canceled various series and are reassessing their future production plans.



## **CONVENTIONAL IS BEING UNDERVALUED**

Another of Jim’s observations was that “conventional TV remains popular” and profitable. He cited examples of how traditional television programs demonstrated long-term success despite industry changes over the decades (home video, cable, on-demand, realty TV, streaming).

**His Prediction:** that “the conventional will dominate for the foreseeable future as long as wise investments are made in the material created” [i.e., full 22-episode season of compelling scripted programming.]

**What Has Happened:** Linear audiences continue to shrink but a plateau may be in the near future. A year ago, NextTV’s David Bloom wrote: “There’s still a profitable if sharply declining business serving those tens of



# The Strikes: Was Jim Richards Right?



millions of customers who still love the best of cable TV: convenience, a broad mix of programming, a single bill and a customer-service provider you can (eventually) reach on the phone.”

At about the same time, the web site CableTV.com surveyed 500 consumers who “still pay for cable TV instead of cutting the cord. Nearly half (46%) said they had cut the cord, and just over half of that group (53%) returned to cable after less than a year.” Three of the top five reasons for returning reference programming mix and quality. The other two reasons cited slow internet connectivity and the high cost of multiple streaming subscriptions.

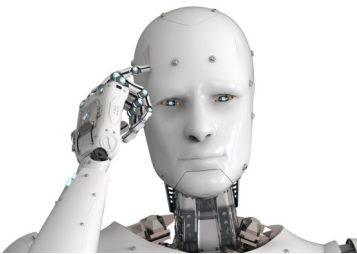


## **TECHNOLOGY IS NOT CREATIVITY**

Jim made the argument that “any artificial intelligence software will have its limitations. AI has no imagination. AI cannot brainstorm.”

**His Prediction:** “AI will be used to augment some writing, but most scripting will still be done by humans.”

**What Has Happened:** The two writers guilds have included rules in the new contracts that keep the focus on human-created concepts, characters, stories and scripts.



## **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS NOT AN ARTIFICIAL THREAT**

He conceded that the improving technology “can replicate the faces and voices of real-life individuals.”

**His Prediction:** “The union will successfully establish and reinforce rules for the use of AI regarding speaking roles and the use of a real person’s image and voice. However, the use of real people as extras may diminish since large crowds can be simulated with AI.”

**What Has Happened:** While SAG-AFTRA has put certain key protections in place, expect more AI to be used to simulate crowds and related elements.



## **PEOPLE ARE ASSETS, NOT MERELY EXPENSES.**

“People are usually the most expensive component in the creative world. They are also the most valuable.”

**His Prediction:** “Production staffs (including writing teams) will not be cut as much as the companies want. But it may take some serious debacles resulting from having small operations --- production delays, budget overruns, etc. --- to convince them.”

**What Has Happened:** The strikes alone have proven this to the producers and studios. The loss of new product has proved too costly. But whether this is a lesson they will continue to heed remains unclear.



FRI  
2

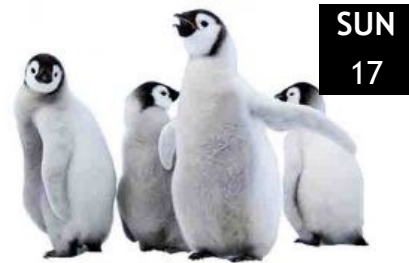
The Nutcracker



WED  
13



TUE  
5



SUN  
17



WED  
6



TUE  
19



THU  
7



FRI  
29



TUE  
12



SUN  
31

# Opportunities

Applications for the next Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator grant program will be accepted from January 1 to February 18, 2024. The program is being administered locally by the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council (GPAC). Approved entities will receive between \$500 and \$2000. For more information, [click here](#).

Someone with good people skills is being sought by the Mattress Factory to be a “Visitor Experience Associate”. This is an hourly position. [More here](#).

An experienced professional is needed by the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre to be the company’s next production chief. This individual will manage both the full-time and part-time production staff, provide administrative management and support for the wardrobe staff cooperatively with the costume director. [Click here for details](#).

Several key positions are open at the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust in the areas of marketing, theater operations and event production. [See the full list](#).

A stage director position is open at the Pittsburgh Opera. The successful candidate will work with the company’s resident artists. [Details here](#).

Positions in marketing, communications and development need filled at the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. [Learn more](#).





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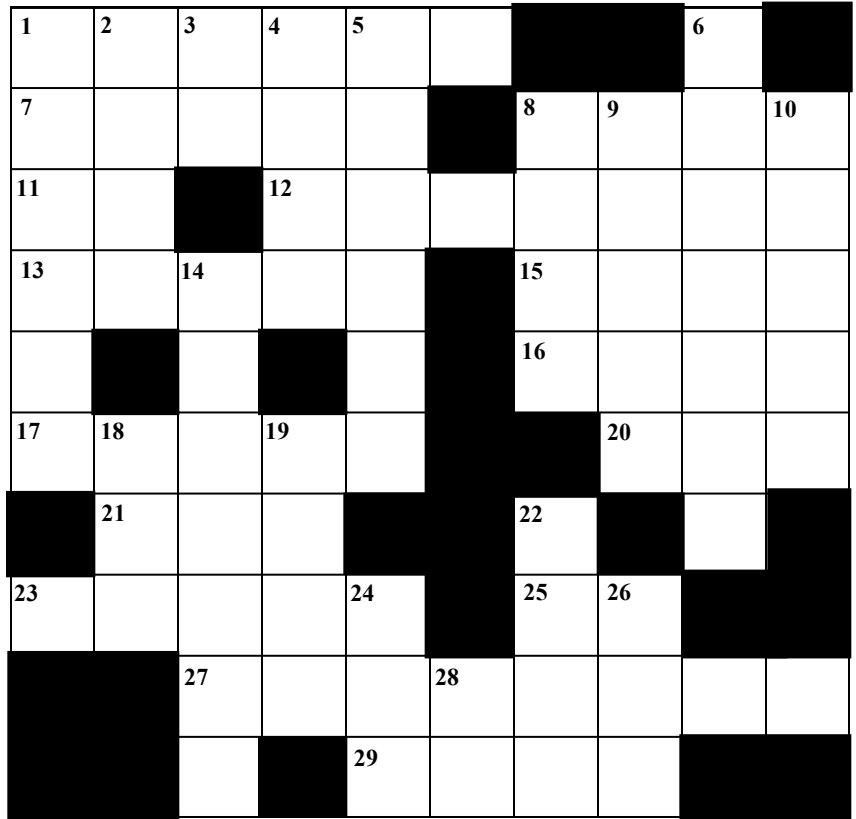


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  [vincentlighting](http://vincentlighting.com)

## Across

1. Literature's green Christmas thief
7. Spooky
8. Reed instrument
11. State east of IL
12. Victorian living rooms
13. Pen name of 1-Across' creator
15. Greek love deity
16. Donate
17. Social media thumbs up
20. Biblical no-no
21. Genetic letters
23. Lovable puppy nickname
25. Retired soldier's dept.
27. Setting for 1-Across' crime
29. Soccer legend



## Down

1. Real name of 13-Across
2. French thinker Descartes, to pals
3. Tehran's internet country code
4. Quick. Little bites
5. Ends
6. Historic Czech region
8. Name of many Slavic princes
9. Karloff, to pals (and narrator of 1966 TV special about 1-Across)
10. German steel city
14. Nameless
18. Wedding words
19. Individually
22. Force that may encourage 20-Across
24. Bunny action
26. Pub offering
28. Charged car, initially

### Last Month's Solution

B	O	S	O	M		A	U	R	A
U	K	E		I	P		P	E	R
D	R	A	G	N	E	T		D	E
D	A	M			R	O	A	S	T
I				G	U	M	P		O
E	B	B		A		H	E	R	O
S	I		S	P	L	A	S	H	
	G	I	N		I	N		Y	O
		P	U		A	K	I	M	S
	R	O	G	E	R	S		E	



Channel  
Pittsburgh

# HOLIDAY FEST 2023



**ROKU**  
BOOK



Channel Pittsburgh is a nonprofit, streaming television station that can be enjoyed on any Roku-enabled TV set or by visiting [www.channelpittsburgh.org](http://www.channelpittsburgh.org). We specialize in classic shows and are developing local programming. "Holiday First" is our annual celebration of vintage Christmas media — music, radio, TV and film!



7:00pm Games People Played  
Classic moments from the Golden Age of Television featuring some amazing kids.  
7:30pm Playhouse 90 Special  
A colorful and delightful version of "The Nutcracker" that originally aired live.  
9:00pm Holiday First Movie  
"A Christmas without Snow"  
11:00pm Kraft Music Hall  
Popular singer Perry Como stars in a Christmas special that originally aired live.  
12:00am: Midnight Movie  
"Santa Claus"  
{viewer discretion advised}.



7:00pm Heart of Gold  
7:30pm String of Blue Beads  
8:00pm Everybody Loves Betty  
Enjoy the wonderful Betty White in holiday theme material from the 1950's that have been digitally colorized.  
9:00pm Classic Comedy Hour  
Bob Hope hosts a hilarious holiday installment that originally aired live.  
10:00pm TV That Time Forgot  
Sample a little-known Christmas program from the early days of television.  
11:00pm TV That Time Forgot  
12:00am Interstellar Cinema  
"Santa Claus Conquers the Martians."



**SUNDAY  
DECEMBER 24**

7:00am Morning Music  
Two hours of classic holiday tunes presented commercial-free.

9:00am Old Time Radio Marathon

12:00pm Christmas by the Book

2:00pm Holiday First Movie  
"The Magical Christmas Tree"

3:30pm Ozzie & Harriet  
Christmas Episodes Marathon

7:00pm Animation Mania  
An hour of vintage and creative seasonal cartoon shorts.

8:00pm Christmas Every Day

8:30pm Literary  
Masterpiece Theatre  
"Scrooge"

11:00pm One Cool Christmas  
Comedy and music with the legendary Steve Allen.

12:00am Fright Flick  
"Silent Night, Bloody Night"  
{viewer discretion advised}



**MONDAY  
DECEMBER 25**

7:00am Morning Music

9:00am Littlest Angel

10:30 Christmas Tales

11:00am TV That Time Forgot

12:00pm Holiday First Movie  
"Son of the Navy"

1:30pm General Audiences

2:00pm Holiday First Movie  
"A Clampett Christmas"

4:00pm Heroes of the Old West

4:30pm Four Star Playhouse

5:00pm Holiday First Movie  
"The Cheaters"

7:00pm Miracle on 34th Street  
Wonderful TV version of the beloved movie.

8:00pm Bob  
A digitally colorized Christmas episode of "Love That Bob"

8:30pm Jack Benny Color Program  
A digitally colorized episode of Jack Benny's hit TV show.

9:00pm Jack Benny Color Program  
Another one!

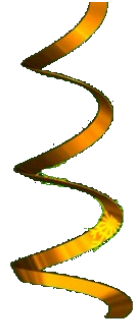
9:30pm George & Gracie  
A digitally colorized "Burns & Allen" Christmas episode.

10:00pm Moments in Time

11:00pm Racket Squad

11:30pm Crime Scene

12:00am Midnight Movie  
"Snow Beast"  
{viewer discretion advised}





**TUESDAY  
DECEMBER 26**

7:00pm Welcome to Comedyville  
7:30pm Vital Signs  
8:00pm Holiday Fest Movie  
"The Snow Queen"  
9:30pm Your Hit Parade  
10:00pm Holiday Fest Movie  
"Beyond Tomorrow"  
12:00am Midnight Movie  
"The Beast from the Haunted Cave"



**WEDNESDAY  
DECEMBER 27**

7:00pm Heart of Gold  
7:30pm String of Blue Beads  
8:00pm Files of Joe Friday  
A digitally colorized "Dragnet"  
Christmas episode.  
8:30pm Files of Joe Friday  
9:00pm Hollywood Palace Memories  
Bing Crosby and his family celebrate  
Christmas 1960's-style.  
10:00pm Judy Garland  
Digitally colorized Christmas "party"  
starring Judy and her daughter,  
Liza Minnelli!  
11:00pm TV That Time Forgot  
12:00am Midnight Movie  
"The Snow Creature"  
{viewer discretion advised}

**THURSDAY  
DECEMBER 28**

7:00pm Animation Mania  
8:00pm **Pittsburgh Tempo**  
Local music stars perform holiday songs  
in seasonal videos!  
9:00pm Classic Movie of the Week  
"The Great Rupert"  
11:00pm TV That Time Forgot  
12:00am Midnight Movie  
"High Voltage."



**FRIDAY  
DECEMBER 29**

7:00pm Santa and the Fairy Queen  
7:30pm Santa and the Three Bears  
8:00pm TelePlay  
8:30pm TelePlay  
9:00pm Sherlock Holmes  
A digitally colorized Christmas mystery  
is solved.  
9:30pm Holiday Fest Movie  
"The Abe Lincoln of Ninth Avenue"  
11:00pm Files of Joe Friday  
11:30pm Files of Joe Friday  
12:00am Midnight Movie  
"Snow Beast"



 **SATURDAY  
DECEMBER 30** 

7:00pm Jack Benny Color Program  
7:30pm Jack Benny Color Program  
8:00pm Hollywood Palace Memories  
9:00pm Holiday First Movie  
"A Christmas without Snow"  
11:00pm One Cool Christmas  
12:00am Interstellar Cinema  
"In the Year 2889".



*We also have great  
New Year's programming  
for December 31  
and January 1!*

