

Entertainment Christmas season is here

By BOB SPENCE
Thomson News Service

Santa has already made a number of quick trips south to appear in various Santa Claus parades, so the Christmas season must be here.

Let's look ahead at just a few of the Christmas specials various TV networks have planned.

Family Channel has three delightful tales debuting in early December. The Christmas Visitor (7 p.m. Dec. 1) is set in drought-stricken Australia in 1891. The young son of an impoverished farmer shakes up his family when he tells them he has just seen Father Christmas. The Bestest Present (10:10 a.m. Dec. 5) is an award-winning animated special based on the characters from Lynn Johnston's cartoon strip, For Better Or For Worse. It's all about getting Christmas back on track. The Small One (7 p.m. Dec. 9) is an animated tale about a Hebrew boy forced to sell his donkey. A man named Joseph buys Small One to carry his pregnant wife, Mary, to Bethlehem.

First Choice has the wacky National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation on tap Dec. 2 (9 p.m.), with Chevy Chase struggling through mishap after mishap.

Home For Christmas, which premieres on both First Choice and SuperChannel Dec. 3 (7:30 p.m.), star Mickey Rooney as an elderly crook who gets caught breaking into a car. While neither is aware of the relationship, the man who catches him - and who takes him home to have the thief work off damages to the car - is the thief's long-lost son.

A fabled feline shows up on CBC-TV Dec. 7. Garfield's Christmas (animated) airs at 7 p.m.

CANADIAN

Pony (10:30 p.m. Dec. 8) on YTV, is a half-hour Canadian special about two Saskatchewan children who really want just one thing for Christmas - a pony to ride around their father's wheat farm.

If, by the end of the first week of December, you are starting to worry about your long Christmas shopping list, you haven't started yet, you can turn to CTV for some advice. Spence's Guide To Christmas (7 p.m. Dec. 9) features among others, Bill Cosby offering tips for gift-giving. And Ebenezer Scrooge learns a lesson about the real spirit of Christmas.

Among the specials on Global TV are A Mystery and Me (7:30 p.m. Dec. 11), in which a teenage girl and a mouse team up to find a missing department store Santa and a pair of



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familiar animated tales: Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer (7:30 p.m. Dec. 13) and Frosty the Snowman (7:30 p.m. Dec. 14).

Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without various versions of Charles Dickens' The Christmas Carol. On Dec. 16 (9 p.m.) CTV offers the 1951 British classic, Scrooge. Alistair Sim portrays the skinflint.

Also on Dec. 16, CTV has a holiday special set in the High Arctic. The Woman Who Raised A Bear As Her Son is an animated tale based on a traditional Inuit fable (7 p.m.).

Olympic silver medalist Elizabeth Manley does some climbing and some skating in Back To The Beanstock on CBC (8 p.m. Dec. 16). She plays the high-spirited son of Jack the Giant Killer who climbed a beanstalk and disappeared. Now, junior is climbing up that beanstalk, searching for dad.

Rita MacNeil gets the Christmas bells ringing in a musical special Dec. 17 (9 p.m., CTV). Filmed on Cape Breton Island, Now The Bells Ring is about a traditional, down-home Christmas. If Rita singing Silent Night doesn't get you in the Christmas spirit, nothing will.

While we're talking about Christmas spirit - if you sometimes wish that the Spirit of Christmas Past would whisk you back to the old days for a few hours, you might check out YTV. It is running a number of

Christmas episodes from long-deceased shows. The Cartwrights welcome you to the Ponderosa to celebrate Christmas on Bonanza on Dec. 23 (4 p.m.) and special Christmas episodes of the old Lassie series air at 3 p.m. on both Dec. 21 and 22.

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