



## Networks Cast a Spell on Viewers with 31 Days of Programming

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As spooky season commences, networks are scaring up new ways to celebrate Halloween and, in some cases, give viewers a good fright.

For Freeform, the celebration began October 1.

Freeform's '31 Nights of Halloween' Brand IDs Reel from Promax on Vimeo.  
[video courtesy of Freeform]

"Our fan base loves Halloween like no other," Tricia Melton, SVP of marketing, creative and brand at Freeform, told Daily Brief. "It's really one of their favorite holidays-they can't get enough and they start their own preparation. Starting October 1, they really are ready to get into the spirit."

This year, Freeform is celebrating by adding Ghostbusters 1 and 2, the Scream franchise and 31 Nights of Halloween Fan Fest to its lineup. They join returning films like Hotel Transylvania, Scooby-Doo and Tim Burton's Nightmare Before Christmas-of all which are ingrained in Freeform's lineup.

Also returning is Hocus Pocus, the 1993 film that's "created a life of its own with a millennial audience," Melton says. While the film remains a staple for 31

Nights of Halloween, it's airing a whopping 30 times throughout the month of October.

"And you might ask yourself, 'Why not 31?' Well, because we don't want to be predictable," Melton said.

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Despite its rebrand from ABC Family in 2016, Freeform remains a staple for family-friendly programming during October. The rebrand also allowed Freeform to expand its reach and dive deep into interactive elements that support 31 Nights of Halloween.

"The shift from ABC Family to Freeform allowed us to modernize our approach and take it a little bit further with experiences that are really designed for [Instagram]," Melton said.

That's where the second annual Freeform Halloween House comes in. Hosted from Oct. 2 to Oct. 7 at the Hollywood Athletic Club, the pop-up event allowed fans to engage in all things Hocus Pocus, Tim Burton's Nightmare Before Christmas and The Addams Family with photo ops, games and activities.

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Freeform's Halloween House. [Freeform]

Melton bills it "the grand opening of Halloween."

"Every year we look for opportunities to lean into the audience and provide unique experiences that they can only get with Freeform," Melton said. "Our brand of Halloween is distinctive and different because we're not really about the 'horror' of Halloween. Our brand is really fun and 'spooktacular.'"

Meanwhile, Turner Classic Movies (TCM) is staying true to its core with seven decades of old-school horror films.

"We definitely like to give our viewers a more curated experience and we try to find a balance for both casual horror fans and the genre die-hards who take their Halloween viewings seriously," Ben Cheaves, programming coordinator for Turner Classic Movies, told Daily Brief. "We try to find titles that are classic, traditional viewings for the season while also introduce fans to some titles they might not be familiar with or maybe have forgotten about over the years."

While last year focused largely on major horror film stars such as Lon Chaney, Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff, this year examines common legends and folklore like witches, vampires, ghosts and the occult.

Ranging from the '20s to the '80s, that lineup includes romantic comedies like *Bell, Book, and Candle*, silent classics (*The Phantom Carriage*) and 70s art house (*Suspiria*).

It also features ongoing monthly franchises like the "Monster of the Month," where TCM is spotlighting the King of Monsters, *Godzilla*, every Friday night in October.

That's in addition to other themed nights like Silent Sunday Nights, TCM Imports and TCM Underground—all of which explore the horror genre with their own unique outlooks, Cheaves said.

"There are lots of entry points for viewers seeking to add something different to their usual Halloween viewing schedule."

AMC's FearFest logo [courtesy of AMC Networks.]

Like TCM, AMC is diving deep into horror with its annual marathon, Fearfest. Beginning Oct. 13, the programming block—now in its 23rd year—will feature everything from *Friday the 13th* to *Leprechaun*, *Alien*, and various Stephen King classics.

On the other hand, Travel Channel is packing its schedule with a month's worth of paranormal programming with the return of "Ghostober."

Dubbed "the Travel Channel's Superbowl" by general manager Matthew Butler, Ghostober features everything from a live ghost hunt in Salem, Massachusetts, to an investigation of the house that inspired *The Conjuring*.

"And we have the biggest stars and experts in the field to take us to every haunted, cobweb-covered corner in America, including Zak Bagans and the GAC, Jason Hawes and his team of paranormal pioneers and newcomer Dakota Laden, who will bring fear to a new level," Butler said in a statement.

For those hungry for more, Food Network is incorporating plenty of Halloween flavor with returning specials like *Halloween Baking Championship* and *Halloween Wars* on top of new additions like *Kids Baking Championship: Tricks & Treats* and *Outrageous Pumpkin*.

As the love for Halloween grows from year to year, viewers rely on networks to celebrate along with them. That's until the clock strikes midnight on Nov. 1, when the countdown to Christmas commences.