

CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE UK: MORE LIKE THE ROYLES THAN THE ROYALS

Research reveals changing face of the Great British Christmas

Many of the Christmas traditions of a generation ago are being challenged by the UK's love-hate relationship with Christmas TV, according to research published today by Digital UK, the body managing the UK's switchover to digital TV.

The research shows that more than twice as many people (39%) plan to take the Jim Royle approach and watch TV as part of their ideal Christmas Day than intend to go to church (16%) like the Royal Family. And fewer than a quarter of Brits (24%) plan to take a 'traditional' Christmas Day walk.

Of those who do plan to devour the Christmas TV schedules, almost half (42%) will be glued to the annual blockbuster movie and 40% of Brits are looking forward to a comedy Christmas special. Reality TV (3%) has fallen to the bottom of the UK's festive viewing wish list. The Queen's own TV Christmas special does not fare much better - whilst a quarter of the over 50s will watch the royal address to the nation, only 12% of 18-29 year olds will tune in to her speech on Christmas Day.

But crowding round the TV does not necessarily lead to a more harmonious day. Family rows this Christmas are more likely to be caused by arguments over which channel to watch (18%) than when to open the presents (10%), who should do the washing up (14%), or even a rekindled family issue (11%). Only board games prompt more arguments (24%).

Of those that think they will row about the TV, most will bicker about wanting to watch different programmes at the same time (70%) or watching something they don't want to (45%).

Ford Ennals, Chief Executive of Digital UK, commented:

“It seems we have a love-hate relationship with Christmas TV – we love watching it but we don’t always see eye to eye over exactly what to watch or when to watch it.

“The good news is that the big switch to digital TV is fast approaching. Whether you’re a Royle or Royal, digital TV can help ensure a harmonious Christmas Day. Extra channels provide enough choice to keep everyone entertained and the new generation of digital TV recorders mean never having to miss all those must see shows.”

Further findings from the research are as follows:

- Twice as many woman as men prefer to tune into the soaps’ Christmas specials, whilst the chaps prefer classic comedy (43%) and to be to be shaken and stirred by the James Bond film (21% compared to just 8% of women).
- The soaps’ Christmas specials are also particularly popular near where they are set. Almost 1 in 3 people in the North who will watch any TV on Christmas Day say they’ll tune into Coronation St (30%) of Northerners compared to 18% of Londoners say they’ll watch it. Instead, Londoners will be opting for Eastenders (26% of Londoners will make time for it compared to 22% of Northerners).
- Four in ten women (41%) say they would like even more drama on TV at Christmas, compared to just over a quarter of men (26%). Meanwhile 17% of men would like more sport, compared to just 3% of women.

For more information about Digital UK, visit digitaluk.co.uk or call 08456 50 50 50.

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Give digital this Christmas

Shoppers will be able to 'give digital' this Christmas, thanks to a retail initiative designed to prepare people for TV switchover. The Digital SwitchKit is being promoted by Digital UK, the switchover body, to make it easier than ever for people to get digital TV for themselves or as a gift to family or friends.

The SwitchKit consists of a digital box, an aerial check (if needed), installation of the box and a demonstration of how to use it. Prices will start at under £100, depending on what options are taken, and retailers will be free to fix the terms. Hundreds of stores are already signed up to the project, including independent retailers and major groups such as Comet and Currys. In all, around 700 stores are committed to offering the SwitchKit so far.

***About Digital UK**

Digital UK is the independent, not-for-profit organisation implementing digital television switchover in the UK. The company leads the upgrading of the UK's 1,154 television transmitters for digital; communicates switchover to the public; and works with industry to ensure understanding and support for switchover. Digital UK is funded by the public-service broadcasters and multiplex operators. Our consumer helpline is 08456 50 50 50. For press pack and material visit digitaluk.co.uk/press.

About switchover

Starting in 2008 and ending in 2012, TV services in the UK will go completely digital, region by region. The UK's old analogue television signal is being switched off and replaced with a digital signal. This will create a fairer situation in which everyone has access to a choice of digital services, including through an aerial. Switchover will allow the UK to remain a world leader in broadcasting.

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*Research carried out by YouGov 18-20 October 2006. Sample size 2,777 across the UK

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