

RETAIL

Hudson's Bay recruits Schitt's Creek stars for holiday campaign

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Catherine O'Hara and Annie Murphy have great chemistry in "A Call to Joy." Image: Hudson's Bay

By ELLEN KELLEHER

Canadian department store **Hudson's Bay** is embracing comedy as a salve for pandemic fatigue by recruiting two stars of *Schitt's Creek* for its new holiday campaign.

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Hudson's Bay tapped Catherine O'Hara and Annie Murphy of the Canadian television show to sprinkle pixie dust on its "A Call to Joy" advertising spot. The whimsical short reflects Hudson's Bay's desire to stay merry in the coming months amid the pandemic.

"By aligning with *Schitt's Creek*, the campaign validates that Hudson's Bay is hip too," said Chris Ramey, CEO of **Home Trust International**, Palm Beach. "With a call for joy to all, the ad shifts from topical to traditional, and hard reality to fantasy.

"It says this year, we need the holidays more than ever," he said.

A clever romp of a campaign

The one-minute advertising spot opens with Ms. Murphy, who plays the entitled daughter Alexis Rose on *Schitt's Creek*, flouncing down a staircase in a sparkly blue dress and heels as she enters a Christmas party.

Declaring that lights, music and "a whole lot of joy" are necessary this year, she waves her hands and tries to gain the attention of a subdued crowd of party-goers.

The surreal and whimsical holiday film involves many costume changes

Suddenly, Ms. Murphy, in a glitzy gold sequined outfit, is face to face with Ms. O'Hara, who plays her mother Moira on the sitcom, in front of a snowy mountain tableau.

Together, the two discuss how to get ready for the festivities as Ms. O'Hara places ornaments on a tree.

"Should we call the Deck the Hallers'?" asks Ms. Murphy, who receives an affirmative from Ms. O'Hara. The pair proceed to also put out calls for the "Fa la la-ers," the "Joy spreaders" and the "Merry Modernistas."

As they broadcast their announcements, the scene becomes more and more surreal. Like a Greek chorus, the "Fa la la-ers" respond in song from gold picture frames lining a formal room in the next shot.

A series of costume changes ensue and Ms. O'Hara and Ms. Murphy, both now in full winter gear and looking a bit lost, wander into a night scene where friends are having a Christmas dinner al fresco.

"Calling everyone, everywhere," they chortle. A fox next to the table surprises Ms. O'Hara.

In the final scene, Ms. O'Hara and Ms. Murphy are enjoying hot drinks in front of a roaring fire. The two are seated in the window of a Hudson's Bay store.



The message of "A Call to Joy" is to have fun. Image: Hudson's Bay

Hudson's Bay recruited Ms. Murphy and Ms. O'Hara for their latest spot after *Schitt's Creek* established a new bar at the Emmy Awards this year by beating out all of the U.S. comedies to win nine awards for everything from acting to directing.

The zany Canadian-set sitcom recounts the saga of the Roses, a rich family who have no other choice but to live out their lives in a motel after their money is taken by a dodgy business manager. On screen, Ms. Murphy and Ms. O'Hara have real chemistry as mother and daughter, which carries over to their debut on the Hudson's Bay holiday spot.

"Our hope is that having two Canadian fan favorites deliver some lighthearted humor, paired with the nostalgia of our windows and meaningful gift ideas will help to make this holiday season shine brighter," said Meghan Nameth, chief marketing officer at Hudson's Bay, in a statement.

The 60-second A "Call to Joy" holiday spot can now be viewed on Hudson's Bay-branded digital platforms and via primetime television.

Hudson's Bay is owned by Toronto-based Hudson's Bay Company, which also owns Saks Fifth Avenue, and went private this year. The company was founded in 1670, making it North America's oldest, continuously running enterprise.

A change in attitude

High-end retailers are preparing for a holiday season like no other, as many remain weary about in-store shopping and consumer confidence dips in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

In an effort to extend the shopping season and make up for time lost due to prolonged shutdowns, retailers have already begun to kick off the holiday season. However, they are going to great lengths to strike the right tone in their marketing and highlight safety measures to draw shoppers to stores.

Hudson's Bay joins other high-end retailers who have begun emphasizing joy in their holiday campaigns as consumer confidence wanes and coronavirus cases climb ([see story](#)).

Consumers are beleaguered and Hudson's Bay's efforts to lift their spirits also extend to campaigns organized by its U.S. arm as well.

The iconic department store chain Saks Fifth Avenue, for instance, recently shared its love for its hometown by kicking off an elaborate campaign honoring the chutzpah of New York.

The windows at its flagship Fifth Avenue store featured a creative panorama by New York artist Timothy Goodman which offers solidarity to New Yorkers amid the pandemic. The display was one element of a wider drive, dubbed

Saks <3 NYC, to raise funds for those hit by COVID-19 ([see story](#)).

"It's a difficult year for most retailers," Mr. Ramey said. "But department stores like Hudson's Bay are fighting for relevance."

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