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Opinion : Op-Ed

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**The Hollywood Christmas Parade passes by**  
A look back at the annual spectacle, which was recently canceled after a 75-year run.

By Michael Dare, MICHAEL DARE is a photographer and writer. His website is dareland.com. April 8, 2007

FOR YEARS, I HAD A second-floor loft/photo studio on Hollywood Boulevard, above Frederick's, across the street from Johnny's Steak House, down the block from Musso & Frank's, with two enormous French windows that opened out onto the boulevard and the Walk of Fame in all its tacky glory.

It was the perfect place to watch the Hollywood Christmas Parade go by, as all my friends soon noticed.

So just picture a party, a good one, everyone in the mood, when suddenly, from outside the window, comes a marching band playing some hideous piece of Sousa crap. Everyone runs to the balcony and shouts, "Shut up! Please stop that! You're making me nauseous!" But no, the horrible music gets louder until it's right below, and we're all shouting, "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida! Anything but Sousa!"

And then the band is gone, replaced by a guy on a horse who looks like Gene Autry — because it *is* Gene Autry. We hang out the window to get his attention, then shout, "We love you, Roy!"

We discover that one of the TV camera positions is two blocks west, up the parade route, giving us a good two-minute warning as to who is approaching. Knowing Charo is on her way, we make a sign that says "*Cuchi-Cuchi*" and hold it out the window.

And now this 75-year-old Hollywood parade has been canceled, and that makes me nuts. David Geffen, Jerry Bruckheimer, Steven Spielberg — the list goes on and on of the industry bigwigs who could save it as casually as buying breakfast.

It's worth saving and remolding into something spectacular, a parade for the 21st century, entirely interactive, live on TV and the Internet. Turn it into a contest, a Hollywood "American Idol," a reality show, an insane promo for absolutely everything showbiz; encourage interaction with the audience in the street, celebrities throwing their latest DVDs from the backseats of classic American convertibles.

It doesn't take much imagination to sell this thing.

If I were a billionaire, I'd do it in an instant.



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