

A script from



# **“It’s a Madison County Christmas!”**

by

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**SYNOPSIS:**

*"It's a Madison County Christmas" is a play about a local TV show called "Live! With Ed and Lurleen". Set in Madison County, Arkansas in Ed and Lurleen Jackson's basement, this "Regis and Kelly-like" show is complete with guests, singing, and a cooking segment! This play is perfect for your holiday dinner theatre.*

**CAST:**

*Ed Jackson- Husband to Lurleen; he is the stoic type and has been "made" to participate in this program for the past 9 years. He loves Lurleen with all his heart and is the perfect complement to her. He wears dark wash jeans, a flannel shirt and work boots.*

*Lurleen Jackson- Wife to Ed; she is always joyful and looks for the bright side. She is thrilled to have this show and has secret aspirations to one day "make it big" with her country talk show. She just loves everybody and wants everybody to be happy...but does have her breaking point. She wears a tacky Christmas sweater and pants or a skirt.*

*CJ Jackson- Lurleen's niece; she is in her late teens and is borderline Goth. She wants the experience of working on a TV show because this might be her ticket out of town one day. She loves her Aunt Lurleen, but is none too thrilled to be here. She wears dark or black clothes. She could also wear a concert t-shirt of some sort, just keep it tasteful. She wears dark eye make-up, just don't go overboard.*

*M'linda Dudd- One-half of The Dudds, a country duet group. She is similar to Lurleen in that she is just so happy to be here...or anywhere. She is also not too bright at times. She wears overalls with a red turtleneck underneath.*

*B'linda Dudd- The other half of The Dudds; she is always in a bad mood. She enjoys singing with M'linda, but is going to complain about it at all times. She tends to "rain on parades". She wears matching overalls to M'linda's and a green turtleneck. She will also need an outfit that is identical or very similar to what Lurleen is wearing for the makeover segment.*

*Mama- Ed's mother; an offstage voice only, she is every daughter-in-law's nightmare. She is currently living with Ed and Lurleen and it's her mission in life to make Lurleen's life miserable. Her "Eddie", however, can do no wrong.*

*Bubba- Everybody's friend and the town handyman. Bubba is always jovial and helpful. He's in love with B'linda unbeknownst to her. He's the typical "good 'ole boy". He wears overalls or coveralls and work boots with a ball cap. He's been working, trying to clear some snow from the roads all morning.*

*Children- M'linda's children. The dialogue says that there are nine children, but use however many you want or can and change the dialogue to fit the number. The reason for nine- three wise men, three shepherds, Mary, Joseph, and an angel. Make sure they vary in age since they all belong in one family. They should be dressed in Bible costumes.*

**WHEN:**

*A few days before Christmas.*

**PROPS and SET:**

*This play is set in Ed and Lurleen's basement. You can go as far with this as you want with the set. Along the back wall, behind Ed and Lurleen, is a washer and dryer with a laundry basket full of clothes. A hot water heater is to the left of that. Upstage right are the stairs. Downstage center are 4 stools for Ed, Lurleen, M'linda and B'linda. There is a small table in between the 4 stools that has the index cards with announcements, the newspaper, and Ed and Lurleen's books. To the left of the stools is a table for the cooking segment. The table can be plywood on two sawhorses. Draped over the table is a Christmas tablecloth. The ingredients for the cooking segment are laid out on the table.*

*Anything to add to the ambience of a basement will work- a bicycle, cobwebs, old work-out equipment, water skis etc.*

**PROPS:**

*Newspaper*

*3 books covered with titles that can be made on a computer:*

*-"I Shot it From My Kitchen Window"*

*-"I Found it On I-30"*

*-"Shut Up Already"*

*Headset with microphone*

*Feathers*

*Uncooked turkey*

*Baby doll "Jesus" for Nativity at the end.*

*For Cooking Segment:*

*Bowls and utensils- whisk, spatulas, measuring cups, casserole dish, etc.*

*Cinnamon*

*Eggs*

*Flour*

*Brown sugar*

*Pecans*

*Large orange*

*Ginger*

*Sweet potatoes already cooked*

**TIME:**

*This play is approximately 35-45 minutes long. It is 18 pages long.*

**FROM THE AUTHORS:**

*These characters and stories were taken from our lives growing up in the hills of Arkansas and parts of Oklahoma. Several of the stories are true. These characters are not "dumb", but life in this part of the country is certainly a lot simpler. In fact, they are some of the smartest people we know! The nearest grocery store or Wal-Mart is at least a 30 minute drive and it's usually a matter of life and death that you stay in everyone's business. It was always wonderful growing up around such people who took care of each other and formed a family in the community whether you were kin or not.*

*Oh, and for all you Yankees, "shug" is short for "sugar"!*

*This play does not have any strong, evangelical themes. It is meant purely for fun. This is a great way to draw in people from your community who wouldn't otherwise attend church. We sincerely hope you enjoy these characters as much as we have!*

*The timing here is everything. Keep things flowing and moving. Watch out for pauses and keep the pacing up. Comedy tends to happen on a rhythm, so find your rhythm and stay on beat.*

*Please feel free to change the names of the towns or any references to fit your event.*

**Some thoughts about dinner theatre:**

*Many churches have their individual Sunday School Christmas parties. Our church will invite each Sunday School class to have their party at our dinner theatre and then break off into their own classrooms after the show or before it to exchange gifts and for fellowship. Each class will purchase a table. We charge for the catered dinner and a small fee for the performance. It's a great way to raise money for your drama ministry.*

*Serve country food like fried chicken and mashed potatoes or even turkey and dressing with sweet potato casserole that's made during the cooking segment in the play.*

*Play country or bluegrass music while people are coming in. If you have a band that can play this style of music, use them! Make them part of the show.*

*Lights come up and instrumental bluegrass music is playing. We find Ed and Lurleen sitting on two stools with a counter or table (see PROPS and SET) to their left to be used later for the cooking segment. CJ is standing off to the side in front of Ed and Lurleen and they are watching her countdown- "...in 3, 2, 1" CJ is wearing a headset with a microphone attached. She announces the show from the side. The camera is implied.*

**CJ:** Good Morning, Madison County! It's "Live! With Ed and Lurleen" with your hosts, Ed and Lurleen Jackson. *(She encourages the audience to clap)*

**Lurleen:** *(To CJ)* Thank you, hon. Well Good Morning Madison County! Welcome to the "Live! With Ed and Lurleen" show. And Merry Christmas y'all! I am your hostess Lurleen, and sitting next to me is my darlin' husband Ed. Say hello, shug.

**Ed:** Hello.

**Lurleen:** We are coming to you live from our basement in St. Paul, Arkansas. Now as you know, we usually do our show down at the community center, but wouldn't you know it up comes a freak snow storm and we're trapped at home! Good thing my niece, CJ, is a technical genius and got us all set up down here in our basement. Thank you, shug.

**CJ:** Whatever. *(She exits)*

**Lurleen:** We have such an exciting show for you today! But before we get to all our talkin' and guests, I want to say a big 'ole "thank you" to our studio audience this morning. They are the choir from the New Life Baptist Church over near Jasper. They were on their way to sing at the mall in Fayetteville and their bus got stuck in the snow. So we lured them in with some hot chocolate and told them they were in for a treat! Now, since we are in the basement, there are cans of bug spray stationed around here for your convenience.

**Ed:** And if you see a squirrel or a raccoon, I got a baseball ball bat in the corner over there. They're trying to come in here to get warm. If you're squeamish, just lift your feet off the floor.

**Lurleen:** You know that reminds me of a story!

**Ed:** *(She's been talking about this non-stop)* Here we go.

**Lurleen:** Last night about five I kept hearing this noise outside and I couldn't figure out what in the world that was. So I put my boots on and walked out to see what that noise was. I can't even say what it sounded like kind of like "whee whee whee". *(She makes a very annoying and loud noise)*

**Ed:** I told her it was proly a owl or a raccoon.

- Lurleen:** So I went outside with my boots on and there in the tree was this raccoon.
- Ed:** I told her.
- Lurleen:** He looked like little tiny bank robber. Well, I tell you what, I've been keeping some guineas for a few months now and I did not want my birds taken by a raccoon. I went outside and there he was in a tree. He was a big 'ole thing. He was just sitting there looking at me and I was looking at him. So I went in and grabbed Ed's shotgun.
- Ed:** I told her to leave 'em alone. But she doesn't listen to me.
- Lurleen:** So I grabbed the shotgun and went outside and pointed that gun right at that raccoon and I shot at 'em.
- Ed:** *(He's not amused)* She missed.
- Lurleen:** *(Very amused with herself)* I did! I missed 'em. I wasn't but 7 feet away from him and I missed! *(She thinks this is hilarious)* So I shot him again.
- Ed:** She missed.
- Lurleen:** I did! That thing was just looking at me like I was crazy. He finally climbed down and just wandered off. *(As an afterthought...)* I let him go.
- Ed:** He'll be back.
- Lurleen:** *(Now with a bit of darkness and vengeance)* Oh I'm sure of it. And I'll be waitin'. *(She snaps out of it and into her joyful self)* Well, that reminds me about our recent cookbook that I had published! *(She has some books by her on a table)* It's called "I Shot It From My Kitchen Window".
- Ed:** There's some good eatin' in that one. Now that cookbook is our second one, so be sure and pick up our first cookbook, "I Found it On I-30".
- Lurleen:** That's right. That's got Ed's Mama's Sweet Potato Casserole in it. Something we're going to be making today on our show!
- Ed:** You can find our books down at Brenda's Books and Bait Shop on Highway 23.
- Lurleen:** And while we're on the subject of books, you know Ed and I have been married for a long time.
- Ed:** 37 years.

**Lurleen:** Oh you go on. It's been 18 years. But people ask us, "Ed and Lurleen, what's your secret?" So we wrote a little book about our advice to married couples. It's called "Shut Up Already". Well let's take a look at what's going on around town. We start off the show with witty chit-chat that includes what we did last night. Like Regis and Kelly.

**Ed:** But you *know* what I did last night.

**Lurleen:** You are supposed to pretend that I don't!

**Ed:** Well that's about the dumbest thing I've ever heard.

**Lurleen:** How long have we been doing this?

**Ed:** Too long.

**Lurleen:** Ed.

**Ed:** 'Bout 9 years.

**Lurleen:** Yes, about 9 years. And in that time have you not learned what the format is.

**Ed:** Hon, the people know that we are married and that we do the same thing every night. We eat our supper and watch the Wheel and CSI and you work your crossword puzzle and I fall asleep in the Lazy Boy®.

**Lurleen:** Well, fine. Let's talk about the announcements and what's going on around town.

**Ed:** (*Ed pulls out the newspaper*) I got the paper right here darlin'. I had to take the shovel with me this morning to find it.

**Lurleen:** Oh good. Well let's see here.

**Ed:** Looks like our high school football team isn't doing too well this year.

**Lurleen:** Yeah, bless their hearts. They've been working so hard. Let's see what else.

**Ed:** Looks like Roy's cows are mysteriously being shot at again.

**Lurleen:** Oh my. Poor Roy, he's just flabbergasted.

**Ed:** I know who it is.

**Lurleen:** Nuh uh.

- Ed:** Oh yes. Those Tyler boys got new bows and arrows and they have property right next to Roy's.
- Lurleen:** Now Ed. You can't just go and accuse those boys when you don't know for sure.
- Ed:** Oh I know. Six arrows sticking out of a cow's behind don't lie. And I'm watching you boys.
- Lurleen:** *(Changing the subject, looking back in the paper)* Oh look! Lonnie Brooks is getting married!
- Ed:** Lonnie? Isn't he that guy who talks to mail boxes?
- Lurleen:** Yeah. *(She is perplexed that Lonnie Brooks is getting married, but smiles so as not to be rude)* Well, how about that.
- Ed:** I guess there's someone for everybody.
- Lurleen:** I guess so. Now before we get to our guests I want to be sure ya'll know about what's goin' on around town. It is time once again to put on your Santa hats and go on down to the Smackover Christmas Festival of Lights sponsored this year by Madison County First National United Bank. I tell you what, downtown looks absolutely beautiful!
- Ed:** Looks like Christmas threw up all over the town square.
- Lurleen:** It's so pretty. There are lots of exciting activities planned for this year. Go ahead Ed.
- Ed:** *(Ed gets out his index cards with the announcements on it)* Don't miss the Miss Jingle Bells pageant to be held at the Johnny Cash Elementary Cafetorium. Miss Jingle Bells '09, Connie Cheetum, will relinquish her crown to the new Miss Jingle Bells.
- Lurleen:** Connie is such a beauty. Her mama owns the Beauty Box on 15<sup>th</sup> and so Connie's hair was always perfect.
- Ed:** Her hairdo is a sin if you ask me. And she didn't win last year on account of her looks.
- Lurleen:** Ed Jackson. You hush up right now.
- Ed:** Marla Lathers was supposed to win, but she didn't 'cause of the incident involving her cigarette lighter and that UPS truck.
- Lurleen:** *(Trying to move on)* Also, for all you kiddos, Santa Clause will be on the square Friday night. He's gonna be ridin' up in his sleigh with all his



presents for the good girls and boys! The festival will continue with the baking and preserves contest. (*Elbows Ed*)

*Ed switches index cards and tries to recite the next lines from memory. Lurleen has obviously written out what he is saying. She doesn't realize it, but she is mouthing some of the words along with him. Don't mouth all of the words, just a few.*

**Ed:** That's right. My wife Lurleen's chocolate cake is to die for. When you bite into that rich, moist slice of heaven you can't help but linger on it's decadence. Why if it were up to me, she'd win the blue ribbon for Best Cake in the whole world.

**Lurleen:** Oh Ed. You are so sweet for saying that!

**Ed:** We have a couple of announcements here from First Baptist Church. Auditions for their Christmas Service are going to be held tomorrow night. Hon, I think you ought to go down and audition for that. You've been wanting to get into acting for as long as I can remember.

**Lurleen:** Oh, now I don't know about that. You really think I should?

**Ed:** Yes I do. Rehearsals are every night for two weeks and I think that might be perfect for me. (*Catching his blunder*) Perfect for you. I mean. Perfect for you.

**Lurleen:** Ed Jackson, are you trying to get rid of me?

**Ed:** Yes.

**Lurleen:** What?

**Ed:** What? (*Back peddling*) I love you.

**Lurleen:** (*She's eyes him suspiciously, but is amused at him*) Now we'd like to wish a very Happy Birthday today to Imogene Graham. Today she turns 72.

**Ed:** Also, Happy Anniversary to Larry and Jane Leonard on their 91<sup>st</sup> Wedding Anniversary. (*Lurleen turns his card over, he was reading it upside down*) Their 16<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary.

**Lurleen:** Also I need to announce that the annual Christmas fundraiser for the Volunteer Fire Department has been moved to the Hillary Clinton Civic Center.

**Ed:** Yeah they had to move it 'cause the firehouse burnt down.

**Lurleen:** Ed! We weren't going to mention that part. Carl's already embarrassed enough about that as it is.

**Ed:** Well, if he hadn't been trying to dirt dobber nests with Roman Candles...

**Lurleen:** *(Interrupting him)* Well, that's all the announcements we have for today. Let's go ahead and bring out our first guests! Fresh off their national tour-

**Ed:** National? They've not been out of the state of Arkansas!

**Lurleen:** *(Mad that he's ruining this; she says this scolding-ly)* Ed, they've been to Texarkana...on the Texas side! Thus, national! *(Back to the audience)* Fresh off their national tour promoting their newest CD "This Dudd's For You" please give a big round of applause for The Dudd's!

*M'linda and B'linda come out and sit on stools. M'linda is beaming from ear to ear and hugs Lurleen and tries to hug Ed. Ed 's not a huge fan. B'linda is tolerating it all.*

**M'linda:** Well hey y'all! It is so good to be here!

**Lurleen:** We are so happy to have you girls and that you made it out here in this blizzard!

**B'linda:** Anytime you tell this *(points to M'linda)* one she's gonna be on TV you better get out of her way. She liked to mowed down Fred Mason in the 4 by 4.

**M'linda:** I honked. Anyway, we are delighted to be here.

**Lurleen:** Oh that's just wonderful. Alright! *(She notices CJ waving at her but doesn't understand what she's trying to say)* Well hey there shug! You look so pretty...

**Ed:** *(Rolling his eyes)* We have to take commercial break, but we'll be right back!

**CJ:** And we're clear!

**Lurleen:** Oh...I see what you were doing there.

**CJ:** Uh huh. *(Under her breath)* We've only been doing this about a billion years.

**Lurleen:** What darlin'?

**CJ:** Nothin' Aunt Lurleen.

*The doorbell rings.*

**Lurleen:** Carly Jo, would you run upstairs and answer the door? Mama doesn't like to answer it.

**CJ:** *(Angry)* Do I have to everything around here? And it's CJ! *(Stomps upstairs loudly but it's completely lost on Lurleen)*

**M'linda:** Oh hey, I keep meaning to ask how you're doing Ed.

**B'linda:** What happened?

**Lurleen:** Oh he's fine. It was an unfortunate incident involving fishing waders and a garden hose.

**Ed:** *(Begrudgingly)* Turns out the water goes on the outside. Possums do too for that matter.

**B'linda:** I don't even want to know...

*We hear "Oh hi, Bubba! Come on in!" Bubba enters.*

**Lurleen:** Well hey there Bubba! How are ya?

**Bubba:** I'm good. You know I turned my tow truck into a snow plow so people could get around for the festival, but my truck stalled right down the street. I wondered if I could get a jump from ya Ed.

**Ed:** Sure thing Bubba.

**M'linda:** Bubba, why don't you stay for a bit. We're doing our show here in the basement 'cause we couldn't get up to the rec center.

**Lurleen:** Hey that's a good idea. We can interview you about the road conditions.

**Bubba:** Well, I don't want to impose.

**Lurleen:** Oh you're not! You want some coffee? *(Calls upstairs)* Carly Jo! Bring Bubba some coffee! *(To Bubba)* She's gonna bring you some coffee.

**Bubba:** Oh that'd be great. Hey, M'linda is that your brood out there in the front yard?

**M'linda:** *(Alarmed)* Why? Were they destroying something?

**Bubba:** No, they're just building a big snowman.

**M'linda:** *(Relieved)* Oh, then yes. Those are mine!

**Bubba:** Oh, that's nice. They're all dressed up in costumes looks like.

**M'linda:** Yeah, we got play practice for the children's program at church after this.

**Bubba:** Are all those yours?

**M'linda:** Yep. All nine of 'em. Austin, Tyler, Sherman, Dallas, Houston, Abilene, Irving, Antonio and Phoenix.

**Bubba:** Phoenix, huh?

**M'linda:** Yes, we love Texas.

*Bubba looks at B'linda questioningly, but she shrugs not wanting to "go there".*

**B'linda:** Sometimes she's a squash short of a bushel.

*CJ comes downstairs "lightly" with cup of coffee in hand.*

**CJ:** *(Flirting awkwardly)* Here ya go, Bubba. I put some sugar in it. *(She puts a slight emphasis on "sugar". It is all lost on Bubba)*

**Bubba:** Thanks, darlin'. You know you were knee-high to a grasshopper just yesterday. My sister used to change your diapers when you were just a little thing. Hey y'all, I'll be right back. I need to go radio in to the police station and let 'em know about the roads out here.

*Bubba exits. CJ is speechless and mortified at Bubba's diaper comment. After Bubba exits she turns and runs upstairs.*

**Lurleen:** Are we on the air yet? *(Calls upstairs)* CJ are we back on yet?

**M'linda:** Well, that red light is on, does that mean we're on?

**Lurleen:** Yes, it does.

**B'linda:** I'm working with a bunch of idiots.

**Lurleen:** And we're back with the Dudds! Coming up later in the show we've got a cooking segment and a fun makeover featuring all the latest styles! Now girls, you both just got back from your singing tour.

**M'linda:** That's right! We had a wonderful time singing all over the place. We have our new CD out.

**B'linda:** That's right. It's called "This Dudd's For You".

**Lurleen:** Oh I just love it! It's been playing non-stop in my car.

**Ed:** *(He knows all too well and is sick of their music)* Yep.

**Lurleen:** I almost took Ed's hand off when he tried to take it out of the player. One time he was holding it out the window like he was trying to throw

it out while I was driving. *(She laughs)* He's such a kidder. Now tell us about some of the songs on there.

**M'linda:** Well, we've got "Lovin' Me When Gravity Takes Over", and the title song "This Dudd's For You". And one that B'linda wrote all by herself!

**B'linda:** It's called "Their Feet Don't Stink When You Love 'Em". I had a doozy of a time coming up with something that rhymes with "antifungal".

**Lurleen:** I think that's my favorite song. You've also written a book, just like me and Ed.

**M'linda:** That's right. It's our own diet regimen. It's called "If It Tastes Good, Spit It Out".

**Lurleen:** Well, that sounds wonderful. I bet you won't be able to have what's coming up in our show in your diet regimen, 'cause it's all kinds of good! We've got Mama Jackson's Sweet Potato Casserole just waiting to get made in our cooking segment.

*CJ enters and motions to Ed and Lurleen.*

**Lurleen:** Hey, shug!

**CJ:** We're off the air right now 'cause the weatherman cut in with a weather bulletin.

**Lurleen:** Oh! Okay, well I guess we'll just stay put and be ready for when we come back on. Carly Jo, why don't you entertain us with one of your little poems that you wrote!

**CJ:** I'd rather not.

*CJ exits upstairs. Lurleen follows her trying to get her to participate.*

**Lurleen:** Oh, come on now. Why don't you recite the one you wrote about unicorns and death. That was lovely.

**M'linda:** Look here Ed. Lurleen has put us together for the cooking segment.

**Ed:** No she has not. She knows better than that.

**M'linda:** Ed, you're a hoot. Oh look we're supposed to dress and stuff a turkey. I guess that's the tom I saw in the pen out there. Ed you better go ahead and do the deed so we'll be ready.

**Ed:** I'll go get my shotgun.

*Ed goes to grab the shotgun.*

**M'linda:** Oh no Ed, don't use the shotgun silly, we'll be picking shot out forever. You're gonna have to wring its neck.

**Ed:** You wring its neck. Do you see the size of that bird? It's a turkey on steroids.

**M'linda:** Oh go on with ya.

*We here all the commotion of Ed chasing down the bird. You can either use sound effects or have someone behind the set with a crash box and a turkey caller.*

**M'linda:** *(Yelling up the stairs)* Mrs. Jackson? *(No answer)* Mrs. Jackson?

**Mama:** What?

**M'linda:** Could you turn the oven on to 350. *(No answer)* Mrs. Jackson?

**Mama:** No!

*Lurleen enters, rolling her eyes at Mama Jackson's refusal to help.*

**M'linda:** Why not?

**Mama:** I've got corn remover on and I'm watching my show.

**Lurleen:** Mama Jackson, that is not true. I helped you remove those corns yesterday.

**Mama:** They're stubborn.

**Lurleen:** Mama, get up out of that Lazy Boy® and turn the oven on. You don't want to add pounds right before the holidays 'cause you've been sitting

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**ENDING:**

**M'linda:** Alright! Let's sing "Hark the Herald Angels Sing".

*Everyone sings "Hark the Herald Angels Sing".*

**Lurleen:** That was so pretty! I can see why y'all are going to sing at the mall! Let's see what should we sing next? Bubba, what's your favorite song?

**Bubba:** I always loved "Away in a Manger".

*M'linda leads out on "Away in a Manger". While you are singing, CJ enters leading all the children in their manger scene costumes. They set up the manger scene downstage center with the rest of the cast standing behind them, but still able to be seen by the audience.*

*Optional: When the song is finished, one of the children can have Luke 2 memorized and quote it from memory. Another idea is to split up the verses with all the children. You can also have one of the cast members read it from the Bible.*

**Ed:** Amen. Let's sing "Silent Night".

*Ed leads out singing "Silent Night". Once you are finished, Bubba bellows out singing "Joy to the World". When the song is finished everyone is abuzz, talking about how much fun this is and this might be a new tradition, etc. CJ is trying to get Ed and Lurleen's attention.*

*Edit this ending to fit your time limit. Cut or add songs as needed.*

**Lurleen:** Hey there, shug! Are you having a good time? See I knew if you just joined in and got in the Christmas spirit-

**Ed:** Well, folks, we need to wrap this up so that's all the time we have for today!

**Lurleen:** Oh, I see what she's doing. Join us tomorrow when we welcome Crystal Lynn Crawford from The Beauty Box for some holiday hair tips and then Ed's going to show us how to blow out a septic line. Hopefully we'll be back in our old studio...although I kind of like doing our show down here-

**Mama:** Nuh uh! I can't hear my stories! And you people are all crazy!

**Lurleen:** We love you too, Mama Jackson!

*Ed leads out in "We Wish You a Merry Christmas".*

**All:** Merry Christmas, y'all!

*Lights fade. The end.*