

# Q&A with Christmas superfan and Hallmark Channel star Ashley Newbrough

Romantic dramedy ace has new holiday film

**BEHIND THE SCREENS WITH JOSHUA MALONI**

Ashley Newbrough doesn't need a Christmas tree farm in her heart. She has her parents' house in Ontario.

In on a visit from the West Coast, she said, "My mom is incredibly festive when it comes to celebrating holidays. So, I have lots of fond memories of themed birthday parties – and just any excuse to decorate the house, she would do it. And Christmas, especially."

"Right now, it looks like our house is a store for Christmas. Everything Christmas really. She doesn't leave a table untouched. Everywhere you look, there is full-blown Christmas decorations. It's amazing (laughs)."

It's no surprise, therefore, to find the actress starring in a new holiday-themed movie for Hallmark.

What is eye-opening is how adept Newbrough is at this film genre – at Christmastime or otherwise.

There's not a great deal of variation in the general plotlines of Hallmark-style romantic-drama-comedy movies – and, frankly, that's not why we're watching anyway. Two people meet, develop an interest, quarrel, and eventually fall in love. It's not complicated, nor should it be.

But the stories have to be believable, and the characters worth rooting for (or against). The success or failure in these films often comes down to an actor's ability to deliver lines and craft authentic soulmates we aspire to find.

Psychology Today says there are "5 Essential Qualities for a Romantic Partner." Among the traits are kindness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and an understanding that relationships take work.

These are the qualities Newbrough brings to her performances – whether it's as a psychology student sharing lessons on loss with a widower and his young daughter, or as an advice columnist tracking down a mysterious love letter in her hometown.

In a word, Newbrough is believable. Though having a classic movie star look, she comes across as accessible, relatable and real. Her delivery isn't clunky or forced, but smooth and direct.

It's like watching a real person play ... a real person.

True love should ring true, after all.

This talent will be on display this weekend in Newbrough's "Christmas for Keeps." The film was written by fellow romantic dramedy all-stars Nicki DeLoach and Megan McNulty.

"'Christmas for Keeps' is about five friends that reconnect 10 years after high school," Newbrough said. "Their beloved drama teacher passes away, so they all come together again for his memorial service. And in honor of him, they do a bunch of Christmas activities that he always did."

"My character, Sarah, is working to take over her dad's practice; and she's become a bit of a workaholic." She has two boys, along with her high school sweetheart, and is learning to look to life outside the office.

"It's good to practice balance and moderation and all that good stuff. So, I think when she's brought



At Christmastime, a close-knit group of childhood friends return home after 10 years to take part in the celebration of life of their beloved high school teacher. Pictured are Marielle Scott, Cardi Wong, Ashley Newbrough and Christa B. Allen in "Christmas for Keeps." (Photo by David Astorga/©2021 Crown Media United States LLC)

back together with her friends, she is reminded that – that it is OK to have some fun."

Newbrough shared more about her Hallmark experiences and holiday happiness in this edited Q&A.

**Q:** So, it's life imitating art when we see you in these movies and you're surrounded by all of these Christmas things. It's not so far removed from your actual real life.

**Ashley Newbrough:** Yeah, we actually made a joke earlier. I was helping her finish up some decorations, and I told (my mom), "Props on the Hallmark movie." They would have a heyday with her collection; they wouldn't need to get anything – they could just use what she has!

And it would work with one of their sets, because Hallmark has an impeccable standard when it

comes to their set decoration.

I've actually texted her photos while shooting ones before, like for ideas, and she's taken them to heart. That tells you a lot right there (laughs).

**Q:** What do you like about this particular genre? What appeals to you about this type of film?

**Ashley Newbrough:** What do I like? Well, I mean, I love Christmas. It's my favorite time of the year. And if I get an opportunity to be involved in celebrating that time of the year, I'm all for it. I especially love shooting Christmas movies, because it's like I get to celebrate the season twice in a year.

They're feel-good movies. And it's like you get to dive into a Christmas snow globe. It's a great time. The stories, they've got the heart and festive feeling.

What's not to love? It's hard to say "No."

**Q:** We know there's going to be a happy ending; two people are going to get together at the end. And that's fine. That's what we expect, and that's what we come to enjoy about these films. But they're not all equal, right? Like, some of the plots are better. Some of the actors – like you – are definitely better than others.

So, when you're looking at these scripts, what are you looking for? You mentioned heart. I mean, how much does that play into it? How much is the script, the director, the people you're going to be starring alongside? What is the formula you're looking for when you decide to do a film like this?

**Ashley Newbrough:**

That's an interesting question. The heart thing is crucial, for sure. It has to have heart, and if it could have a little bit of humor in there, that's always great.

The great thing with Hallmark is you know the people are going to be amazing. Everyone involved, they're on top of it. They know what they're doing; they're pros – especially when it comes to Christmas. They have their method down to a science. ...

If it's Hallmark that's involved, it makes it a very easy "Yes." Because I think, for me, I know Hallmark understands the assignment when it comes to Christmas.

**Q:** Hallmark does a great job with this time of year. And a lot of it is because, these films, they're very easy and breezy, and they're just fun and they're comforting.

SEE CHRISTMAS, on Page 19

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