

# FAQ on Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade

What it takes to keep NBC's high-flying holiday spectacle afloat every year

**The First** The first Macy's parade, held on November 27, 1924, included floats, bands and live animals borrowed from the Central Park Zoo, and was seen by 10,000 spectators. It was such a hit that Macy's announced it would become an annual event, and—except for a three-year absence from 1942 to '44, when the rubber from the parade's popular balloons was needed for World War II efforts—the celebration has continued each year.

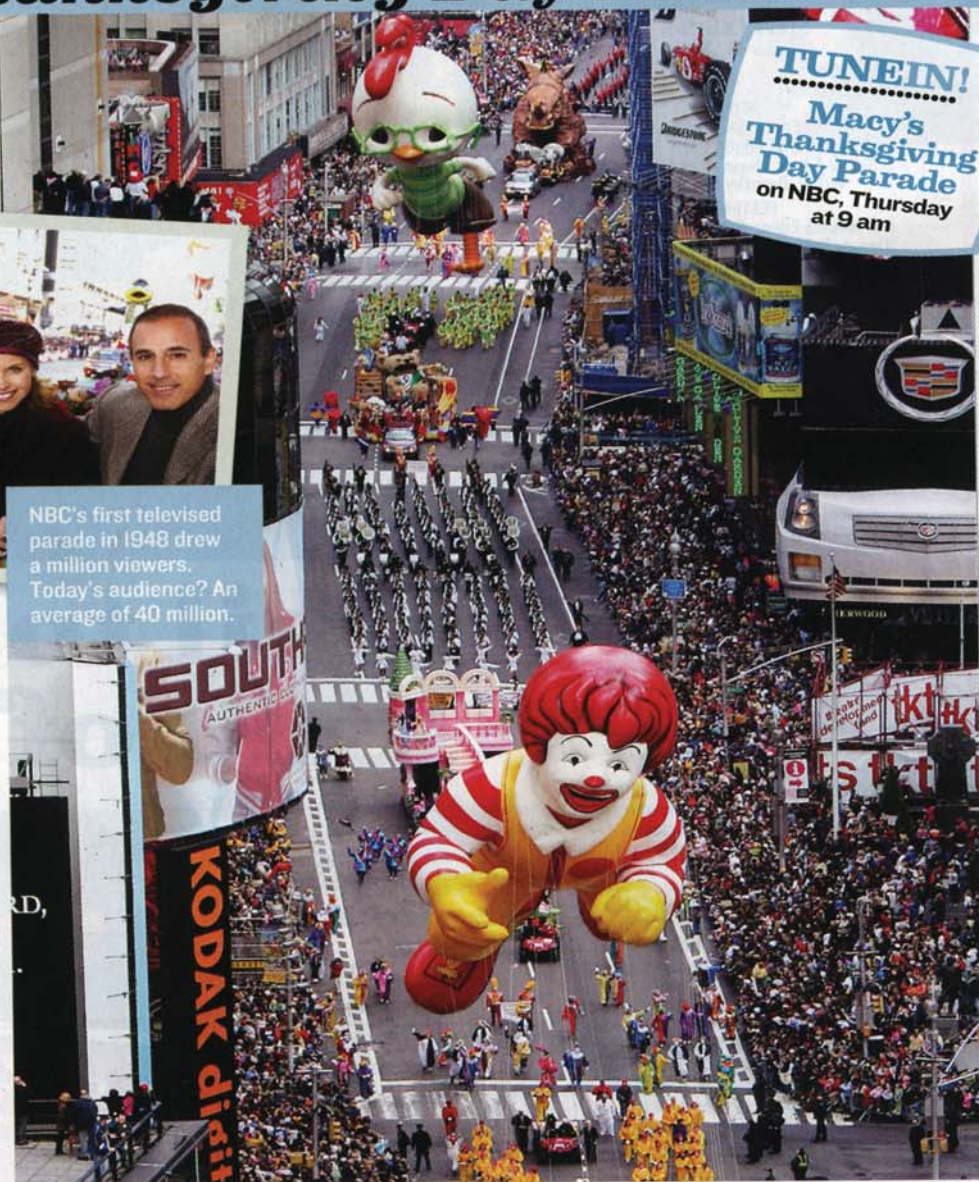
**The Balloons** The parade's signature helium balloons were introduced in 1927, with popular cartoon character Felix the Cat as the first major balloon star. In 1928, Macy's decided to release the giant balloons into the air at the end of the show, with return addresses attached and the promise of a \$25 cash prize for anyone who found and returned one. But after airplane pilots began to try to capture the balloons in midair, the company discontinued the practice in 1933.

**The Floats** Today, the floats—a parade signature since the first event in 1924—are designed, constructed and stored in Macy's parade studio in Hoboken, New Jersey, in a building that originally housed a Tootsie Roll factory. The massive creations, which can stand as tall as four stories high, are designed to fold into small boxes so they can be re-assembled on-site on the eve of the parade.

**The Supplies** Macy's is the second-largest U.S. consumer of helium. The first: the U.S. government.



NBC's first televised parade in 1948 drew a million viewers. Today's audience? An average of 40 million.



Dora the Explorer makes her debut this year.

## By the numbers

- 15:** Average number of giant character balloons
- 70:** Number of volunteers to steer each balloon
- 20:** Average number of floats
- 1000:** Pounds of confetti released
- 4000:** Number of Macy's employees who volunteer to help stage the parade each year
- 2.5 million:** Average number of spectators lining the 2.5-mile parade route