

CULTURE

HBCU Benedict College Band Is Ready to Rock the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade

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Courtesy of Benedict College Marching Tiger Band of Distinction.

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There are a few key indicators that Thanksgiving has arrived: the turkey is thawing, sides are being prepped, playlists with our favorite holiday hits are blaring, and maybe the biggest indicator, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade is queued up on the television.

This year, the star performances, dazzling floats, and giant balloons will once again work their way through Manhattan along with tunes from 12 marching bands hailing from across the U.S. and Mexico. South Carolina's Benedict College and its Marching Tiger Band of Distinction will be one of the groups to set the tone for Turkey Day.

"It's an honor and a privilege for one of the greatest HBCUs in the world, Benedict College, under the tutelage of [President] Roslyn Clark, to represent the state of South Carolina and all HBCUs. It means so much to us," Wade Johnson, band director and instructor at Benedict College, told Cheddar News.



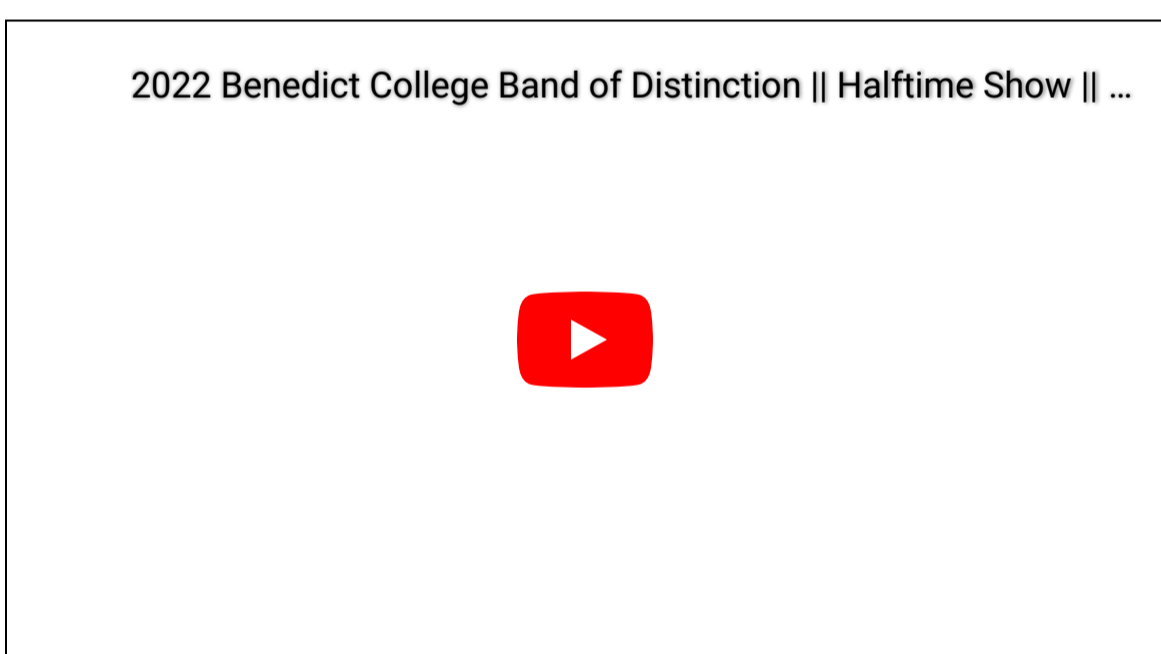
Courtesy of Benedict College Marching Tiger Band of Distinction.

While the band has performed at countless bowl games and other major events, like Martin Luther King Jr. celebrations, Johnson acknowledged just how big it is to get selected to participate in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Last year, Variety reported that more than 25 million people tuned into the 95th annual celebration.

"Being that millions and millions of viewers and millions and millions of bystanders will be watching us, we have prepared a special performance. I'm not going to give it up, but you will see us on the TV screen Thanksgiving morning," Johnson said.

While marching in the parade is perhaps one of the most highly regarded opportunities for band members, it is a huge sacrifice for those taking part — particularly as college students. Most friends and people on campus have returned home to be with loved ones for the holiday but those participating in the parade have to forgo that this year. Johnson said to make up for that lost time with family, special plans have been made to bring as many good vibes to the day as possible.

With limited air time for each performance in Herald Square, he said the band is preparing to make their time on the national stage count. But at least one secret about the big show has been revealed, — The Band of Distinction will play alongside gospel recording artist Travis Greene. Johnson revealed that Greene recently collaborated with the band to perform on an upcoming live album.



"We have an entourage of parents and family members of the band [who] will actually be traveling. We're taking quite a few buses, some folks are driving, and some folks are flying," Johnson said.

Dinner on a yacht in New York City's East River isn't a terrible trade off, especially since many band members will have family in tow. Johnson revealed that a full course Thanksgiving meal with all the trimmings will be prepared for the group after the parade ends.



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