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# Hallmark Channel UK and Universal Networks International

Hallmark Channel (UK) to Become Universal Channel in October as Global Roll-Out of Revitalised Brands Continues

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London (ots/PRNewswire) - Universal Networks International has today announced the rebranding of Hallmark Channel in the UK to Universal Channel, launching its new look on Monday 18th October with the UK premiere of SHATTERED - an original series produced in partnership with E1 Entertainment.

The new channel will also host the UK premieres of ROOKIE BLUE - a global acquisition which has already launched to huge success in the USA and Canada - and FACING KATE, a co-production between Universal Cable Productions and Universal Networks International.

"The Hallmark Channel has a loyal audience in the pay-tv market and already offers a strong line-up of great content including the Law & Order franchise of shows," said Laurence Dawkin-Jones, UK MD, Universal Networks International.

"This rebrand will allow us to enhance the channel by adding fresh, new content - including our global acquisition ROOKIE BLUE and our own co-productions such as SHATTERED and FACING KATE to the best of the existing line-up of series under a channel name that is instantly recognisable, has an exceptional global heritage and feels very contemporary.

"We know it will appeal to both our existing fan base and a whole new audience who may not have previously been familiar with the Hallmark Channel brand," he added.

Universal Channel will further expand the already broad appeal of Hallmark by offering viewers the best US drama series - including its already popular LAW & ORDER franchise of shows - as well as a slate of new and exciting original productions.

Hallmark Channel, on the SKY and Virgin platforms, along with Hallmark Channel HD (on SKY) will become Universal Channel and Universal Channel HD at 6am, while Hallmark Channel +1, on Sky and Virgin, will transform at 7am on the same day.

Rob Webster, BSkyB's director of channels and operations, said: "Sky has enjoyed a distribution relationship with the Hallmark Channel dating back over many years. The channel occupies a distinctive place in UK pay TV and we believe this will only be enhanced through rebranding as the Universal Channel. With fresh impetus and wider appeal, this is good news for Sky customers."

Cindy Rose, executive director of digital entertainment at Virgin Media, added: "The Universal Channel is a strong addition to our fantastic line up of pay television brands and will offer our customers new series of hugely popular shows. We are confident the rebrand will prove successful in attracting new viewers to the channel, whilst maintaining the loyal 'Hallmark' audience."

The rebrand is part of NBC Universal's ongoing multi-million dollar plan to reposition its global network of pay-tv channels around five core brands - Syfy Universal, Studio Universal, Diva Universal, 13TH STREET Universal and Universal Channel - and its commitment to invest in fresh and original productions.

Roma Khanna, President, Universal Networks International and Digital Initiatives, said: "The Universal Channel is the flagship brand in our core channel portfolio and we are delighted to bring it to such an important market as the UK. This move is part of our strategy to deliver strong, exclusive subscription channels with world-class content to audiences around the globe."

ROOKIE BLUE is a high-octane police drama, starring Missy Peregrin (Heroes), which follows the lives of five rookie cops who have just graduated from the Academy. The show launched to huge success on ABC in the US, garnering over 9m viewers.

SHATTERED follows tough, smart homicide detective Ben Sullivan (acclaimed actor Callum Keith Rennie - 24, Flashforward, Battlestar Galactica, Californication) as he races to solve the murder cases that cross his desk daily, with the help of his partner Detective Amy Lynch (Camille Sullivan - Intelligence, Reunion, Da Vinci's Inquest). Sullivan, however, suffers from Dissociative Identity Disorder and his career as a successful homicide detective - as

well as his personal life - soon face considerable pressure from his secret condition. Sullivan never knows which personality will surface and the effect it will have on him and those around him.

FACING KATE stars Sarah Shahi (Life, The L Word) as a top litigator who becomes frustrated with the endless bureaucracy and injustice she witnesses on a daily basis and decides to become the ultimate anti-lawyer: a mediator. The 11x1-hour episodes will air on Universal Channel in the New Year.

Hallmark Channel has already successfully rebranded to Universal Channel in Australia and Africa, adding major markets to the Channel's global distribution.

In the UK SCI FI became Syfy in April, launching the new look channel with a re-imagining of the '80s mini-series V to unparalleled success. More than 1.4m people tuned in to V during the launch week - 39% of whom had never tuned in to the channel previously.

#### About Hallmark Channel

Hallmark Channel launched in the UK in May 2000. Broadcasting in 152 countries globally the international (non US) versions of the channel were bought by privately backed UK-based company Sparrowhawk Media in 2005. Two years later NBC Universal acquired the Hallmark channels - along with Diva TV and Movies 24 - from Sparrowhawk Media, thus complementing its existing television portfolio which included the Sci-Fi, 13th Street, Studio Universal and Universal Channel brands. In the UK the channel is watched by 2.4m viewers who tune in for an average of 78 minutes per day\*.

\*Source: BARB/TRP

#### About Universal Networks International

Universal Networks International, the global channels division of NBC Universal, is one of the world's premier entertainment networks, delivering quality content and compelling brands to over 180 million subscribers in 150 countries across Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Asia. The portfolio is spearheaded by five core channels - Syfy Universal, DIVA Universal, Studio Universal, Universal Channel and 13th Street Universal - which deliver a full range of entertainment experiences to local audiences across the globe. Universal Networks International also operates Movies 24, the (non-US) Hallmark Channel and an interest in the KidsCo joint venture. Universal Networks International is part of NBC Universal; one of the world's leading media and entertainment companies in the development, production and marketing of entertainment, news and information to a global audience. NBC Universal is 80% owned by General Electric and 20% owned by Vivendi.

The launch of Universal Channel will bring to the UK the flagship of our global brand portfolio and will deliver a strong and exclusive a strong and exclusive subscription TV channel to an audiences worldwide.

#### Note to Editors:

A picture accompanying this release is available through the PA Photowire. It can be downloaded from <http://www.pa-mediapoint.press.net> or viewed at <http://www.mediapoint.press.net> or <http://www.prnewswire.co.uk>

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