Apple is jumping into streaming video with a huge library of shows and films

Apple is getting ready to launch a TV and movie streaming service, and that means putting together an expansive catalog of original content. The company is widely expected to unveil its offering at an event on March 25th, and it could give us a first look at some of the original programming that's in the works.

The market for streaming services is already crowded: Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon have all been steadily releasing their own original programming to varying levels of acclaim for years. Disney is expected to unveil its streaming service, Disney+, next month, and NBCUniversal is planning to release a streaming service in 2020. Both companies will be able to rely on deep back catalogs of beloved movies and shows, making an entrance even harder for a newcomer like Apple.

To break into that crowded market, Apple is paying a lot for its original programming — reportedly upward of $1 billion. What does it get for that amount of money? Quite a few shows.

Even though the service has yet to be announced, movie acquisitions, rights deals, and orders for new TV series all get reported months before they debut. So we know a good deal about what Apple has in store for its upcoming service.

If you're expecting the next gritty *Game of Thrones*-style series, you probably won't find it coming from Apple. The company is reportedly sticking to a "family-friendly" approach when it comes to content — no nudity or swearing — and it has

used a heavy hand when it comes to the development of said content. Last year, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that one show, *Vital Signs*, based on the life of Dr. Dre, was "too violent," and it was subsequently canceled, while *Carpool Karaoke* was abruptly delayed because of language.

Apple has picked up a handful of animated and children-oriented projects. There's *Central Park*, an animated series from *Bob's Burgers* creator Loren Bouchard, about a family of caretakers in New York's Central Park. Apple also acquired an animated film called *Wolfwalkers*, directed by Tomm Moore and Ross Stewart, about a girl who decides to save Ireland's wolves, which are being hunted to extinction.

In addition to those projects, Apple signed a deal with the production company behind Charles Schulz's *Peanuts*, and it plans to release a series of STEM-related shorts about Astronaut Snoopy, which will be followed by a variety of shows, specials, and shorts, according to *The Wrap*. Apple also ordered two *Sesame Street* shows, one animated, one live-action.

There are several comedy shows as well. The first is *Dickinson*, a half-hour comedy show about poet Emily Dickinson, which is set to star Hailee Steinfeld (*True Grit, Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse, Bumblebee*), and it's described as "audaciously exploring the constraints of society, gender, and family." The series will also feature Jane Krakowski (*Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt)* as Dickinson's mother.

Also on the list is a yet-to-be-titled series from *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* creators Rob McElhenney and Charlie Day. Not much is known about the show, other than it will "explore the intricacies of the human condition through hilarious and innovative ways." Given Apple's emphasis on PG content, it's likely not going to be anything like *Always Sunny*. There's also *You Think It, I'll Say It*, a half-hour comedy series based on a just-released collection of short stories by Curtis

Sittenfeld. Kristen Wiig was set to star in the series, but she has since dropped out, and the project is reportedly on hold.

The company has several dramas and thrillers lined up for the service. The biggest (and the first show ordered for the service) is a series called *The Morning Show*, starring Reese Witherspoon, Jennifer Aniston, and Steve Carell. It's loosely based off of a book by CNN reporter Brian Stelter called *Top of the Morning: Inside the Cutthroat World of Morning TV.* Apple has ordered two 10-episode seasons for the show, and *Variety* says that Carell will play a "morning show anchor who is struggling to maintain relevance."

Family-friendly, with lots of big names behind and in front of the camera

Other dramas include *Little Voice*, from J.J. Abrams' Bad Robot Productions, which is described as a half-hour dramedy that's about lost 20-somethings that'll be a "love letter to the diverse musicality of New York"; *Little America*, an anthology series from Kumail Nanjiani and Emily V. Gordon (*The Big Sick*) about immigration in America; *Swagger,* a series based on basketball player Kevin Durant; and *My Glory Was I Had Such Friends,* a miniseries based on a memoir by Amy Silverstein about a supportive group of friends who helped her while she waited for a second heart transplant. That project will reunite *Alias* duo J.J. Abrams and Jennifer Garner, who is set to star in the series.

Apple has also given orders to some unnamed dramas. One comes from *La La Land* and *First Man* director Damien Chazelle, and the company is also reported to be closing in on a deal to adapt an Israeli series called *Neverlot*, with Richard Gere attached.

There are a couple of other projects that are currently in development, including *Pachinko*, an "international drama" based on the novel by Korean author Min Jin Lee, about four

generations of an immigrant family, and *Shantaram*, about an escaped Australian prisoner who ends up making a new life for himself in Bombay.

Apple is also prepping several science fiction shows, and it has brought in some heavy-hitters to run them. The first is a reboot of the classic science fiction anthology series *Amazing Stories*. The show started off with *Pushing Daisies, Star Trek Discovery*, and *American Gods* showrunner Bryan Fuller, but he's since left, seemingly because of the company's restrictions. *Once Upon a Time* co-creators Adam Horowitz and Edward Kitsis have replaced him.

Ron Moore, the creator of Syfy's *Battlestar Galactica* reboot is behind a space-based series called *For All Mankind* about an alternate world in which the Cold War-era space race never ended. At New York Comic Con last year, Moore spoke about his fascination with the Apollo missions and said that he's "dangerously optimistic about it."

Apple is adapting a science fiction classic from Isaac Asimov
Apple snagged an adaptation of one of the best-known science fiction novels, Isaac Asimov's *Foundation*, which has long eluded film. The 10-episode series comes from David S. Goyer (*Batman Begins, Man of Steel*) and Josh Friedman (*Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*). It takes place in the distant future as an interstellar empire begins to collapse. Marvel comic writer and fantasy author Saladin Ahmed has said that he's one of the writers on the project.

Apple also greenlit a series starring Jason Momoa, which is described as "an epic, world-building drama." It's called *See,* and it comes from Steven Knight, the creator of *Peaky Blinders*, and Francis Lawrence, the director of *Hunger Games: Catching Fire.* Momoa will play a warrior and leader named Baba Voss.

Finally, word broke in January that Apple is working on a deal

with Simon Kinberg (*X-Men: Dark Phoenix*) and David Weil (Amazon's *The Hunt*) for a "large-budget, ambitious, character-driven genre show." Another project in development is an adaptation of Terry Gilliam's film *Time Bandits*, with *Thor: Ragnarok* writer and director Taika Waititi set to write and direct. Unlike most of the other projects, those two shows haven't been greenlit just yet.

Apple seems to be putting most of its efforts into thriller and action shows, lining up projects like *Are You Sleeping*, a series based on a novel about a true crime podcast starring Octavia Spencer (*Hidden Figures); Defending Jacob*, an eight-episode series that stars Chris Evans (*Avengers: Infinity War*) about a father whose 14-year old son is accused of murder; a 10-episode psychological thriller series from M. Night Shyamalan (which will star *Planet of the Apes'* Toby Kebbell); and *Magic Hour*, a 10-episode mystery series about a girl who travels to her father's hometown and uncovers a cold case. The series is inspired by Hilde Lysiak, a girl who founded a newspaper called Orange Street News in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, when she was nine years old.

Most recently, word broke that Apple has picked up a CIA drama that will star *Captain Marvel*'s Brie Larson. It's based on an upcoming memoir from former CIA operative Amaryllis Fox called *Undercover: Coming of Age in the CIA.*

When it comes to film and documentaries, Apple only has a couple of projects lined up. There's *Home*, a 10-episode documentary series about "the world's most extraordinary homes," and *Elephant Queen*, a documentary film that premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival last fall about a female elephant that must lead her herd away from their home to find food and water. It's also developing a project called *Losing Earth*, based on last year's *New York Times* article about climate change by Nathaniel Rich.

Finally, Apple has two films that it's picked up. The first is

Hala, a film that premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January, about a Muslim teenager who has to navigate cultural challenges at home and at school, and *On The Rocks*, a film by Sofia Coppola starring Bill Murray, about a woman "who reconnects with her larger than life playboy father on an adventure through New York."

A couple of things jump out while looking at that long lineup of TV and film projects. The first is that most of these have been ordered to series. Unlike Netflix or Hulu, Apple doesn't have a long track record of producing its own original content, and it's playing catch-up to try and build a catalog of programming to entice people to check out the service — programming that will likely only live within Apple's platform. Apple also has one advantage that Netflix and Hulu don't: a massive infrastructure of devices where it can promote its service.

International appeal with feel-good and inspirational dramas
Despite that advantage, Apple will still have to compete with the existing video streaming services, pulling viewers away from popular competitors. Apple has brought on a *lot* of talent and ordered high-profile projects that are sure to bring in some attention. There are well-known actors such as Jennifer Aniston, Steve Carell, Jennifer Garner, Brie Larson, Hailee Steinfeld, and Reese Witherspoon as well as creators like J.J. Abrams, Rob McElhenney and Charlie Day, and Kumail Nanjiani and Emily V. Gordon on board to produce series for Apple.

Apple also appears to be taking a page from Amazon's playbook: this slate of projects has a wide appeal internationally, with what looks like a blend of feel-good and inspirational dramas, but there's also a range of genres to attract fans of all stripes.

What we'll find out soon is whether Apple can produce high-

quality content to stand up to the more established players in the streaming world, or if it’ll be an expensive learning curve.

https://www.theverge.com/2019/3/20/18254720/apple-streaming-video-service-greenlit-development-list-tv-film