

'Exclusivity Matters' to Hulu With Original Shows, but Not Library Content



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Hulu's been in the original content business for a long time, but it has also long stood out in the streaming world for a considerable library of shows fresh from broadcast and cable properties, streaming episodes of NBC, ABC and Fox series the day after they air on linear TV.

With new streaming services from legacy television giants like NBCUniversal and WarnerMedia pulling many of their programs back under their company umbrellas, that all stands to change: At Thursday's Peacock investor day, NBCU chairman Steve Burke said his company has the right to remove its content from Hulu in 2022. That's why Hulu is banking on original programming to stay afloat in the years to come.

"You're going to see the availability of certain shows shifting around in the next few years, but one show does not make a service," Hulu svp and head of originals Craig Erwich

said at the Television Critics Association's winter press tour in Pasadena, Calif. "For some of these shows, especially ones that have deep libraries, I don't know if exclusivity is paramount. Where I do think exclusivity matters is in our originals."

Original programs are, of course, top of mind for streaming services looking to stand out and become customers' go-to choice for entertainment. Hulu, for its part, is looking to expand its original slate following the success of *The Handmaid's Tale* and several well-received comedies. The service has greenlit a serialized comedy from *This Is Us* creator Dan Fogelman that will star Steve Martin and Martin Short, Erwich said onstage; additionally, the company is developing Margaret Atwood's recently published sequel to *Handmaid's Tale*, *The Testaments*.

Normal People, an original series based on the Sally Rooney novel of the same name, will be released this spring, as is the drama *Little Fires Everywhere*, a limited series starring Kerry Washington and Reese Witherspoon. The company is also pushing further into documentary programming following the success of its *Fyre Festival* documentary *Fyre Fraud with Hillary*, a four-part docuseries focused on former secretary of state Hillary Clinton.

Erwich said Hulu is focused less on certain genres than building out a company that is appealing to top creators and top talent, no matter the type of show they want to create.

"The genres are really just a canvas for the artist, and creating a home where they can do their best work is where we focus a lot of our time," Erwich said.

Hulu's exclusive library has gotten a considerable boost with the arrival of library and original FX shows, which FX Networks and FX productions head John Landgraf said would be "transformative" for the cable brand. Erwich said the addition

of FX programs on the service in March will create “a program offering unlike anything we’ve had.”

Erwich said there weren’t plans to give Disney-owned brands like Freeform or ABC their own discrete destinations on Hulu like FX will get, but he emphasized that certain shows from those properties are already finding a home on the streaming service.

“There are so many incredible opportunities for Hulu under the Walt Disney umbrella,” he added.

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