For Apple TV Plus to succeed, it has to be everywhere — even Android TV

This week, Apple brought its Apple TV app to many new Android TV devices — not just the Nvidia Shield. And Apple was smart to widen that support — the expiration date for free trials of Apple TV Plus is swiftly approaching, with many customers about to see their subscriptions end July 1st. That gives Apple a month to win over Android TV users by letting them watch flagship shows like the earnest and delightful *Ted Lasso* on the big screen, a show whose second season will premiere near the end of July.

The rollout of the Apple TV app to Android TV OS devices started Monday at 8AM PT, a Google spokesperson confirmed to *The Verge*. As a caveat, the Google spokesperson clarified that support does not extend to third-party operator set-top boxes, so, for example, devices like AT&T's Android TV set-top box probably won't get Apple TV anytime soon.

The rollout does not extend to third-party operator set-top boxes

That Apple's finally made its streaming app available across Android TV devices isn't much of a shocker. The app was previously made available on non-Apple devices like the Chromecast with Google TV and the PlayStation 5, and it's been on Roku and Fire TV devices since 2019. Some Sony TVs running Android TV and other Vizio models running SmartCast OS additionally received support for the app last year.

But it's also not entirely shocking for a company banking heavily on its services offerings. Apple seems to have figured

out somewhere along the way that it needed to play nice with other device makers if it wanted to grow Apple TV Plus subscriptions in any meaningful way. With some 660 million paid subscriptions across its services as of April, Apple TV Plus' estimated 40 million U.S. subscribers is a small but certainly not insignificant slice of that pie — but that figure could quickly change come July when those users will have to decide whether Apple's shows are worth paying for.

Apple launched its service back in 2019 with an astonishingly meager lineup of originals. Sure, they were high-caliber productions with big-name talent and directors at the helm. And sure, some of them were even good! (M. Night Shyamalan's bizarre psychological thriller *Servant* is one such example.) But Apple has extended its lengthy free trials of the service that it offered to users who purchased its devices, and that trial period is very nearly about to end for some of the earliest users to hop on the freebie train.

Apple is about to face a subscriber reckoning
Ted Lasso — which Tim Cook has cited as being a critical success for the platform — will, again, release its second season toward the end of next month. But for some Apple users, their free trials to Apple TV Plus end July 1st.

In other words, Apple's dangling a content carrot in front of its most loyal users in hopes that they'll stick around and hand over their money. But with so many other services available at present, it's unclear whether that'll be enough to make them stay. In fact, research MoffettNathanson estimated earlier this year that nearly 30 percent of Apple TV Plus subscribers did not plan to resubscribe following their trial periods. While $5 per month isn't too much for a premium service comparatively speaking, it does start to add up when people are counting all the subscriptions they fork out money for each month.

Because Apple's entire plan for the service is to be a hub for

either its own in-house productions — or exclusively attained feature films like Tom Hanks' *Greyhound* — that means the company has some catching up to do to reach anything close to the library scale of most of its peers, particularly considering it's about to start making people pay for the service. Making it available across Android TV devices hooked up in users' homes is a good way to prepare for this change. Plus, especially accounting for the pandemic, who on earth wants to watch an entire feature film on a palm-sized iPhone when they can watch it on the biggest screen in their home instead?

It's almost as if Apple realized that doing things the Apple way wasn't going to be a successful model for competing in the streaming wars. And while the service is late to the party in terms of accessibility across platforms — it has taken far too long for this app to arrive on more Android TV devices, in my opinion — it was a necessary move for Apple TV Plus's success in the long run. As long-trialed subscribers discover they'll suddenly need to pay for Apple's content, the churn is going to burn.

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