

In Conversation: ABC News' James Longman and Rachel Scott on Their New Disney+ Newscast

Do you have 10 minutes to spare to get caught up on the news?

ABC News is hoping to get a “yes” from Disney+ subscribers, as the network launched its exclusive daily news show, What You Need to Know, on Monday, July 21.

Anchored by ABC News' chief international correspondent **James Longman** and senior political correspondent **Rachel Scott**, What You Need to Know joins ABC News' around-the-clock programming available on Disney+.

Available every morning at 6 a.m. ET, with an evening edition hosted by Scott set to launch in the near future, What You Need to Know steers clear of a traditional newscast, forgoing a typical studio presentation for an on-location approach.

“We’re actually asking the cameras to follow us while we do our work, which I think makes this really unique,” said Longman of the show’s different presentation style.

TVNewser caught up with the two anchors on the day of the show’s launch as they were in New York City, at ABC News’ new headquarters at 7 Hudson Square. Among the things they discussed are what separates their new bite-sized show from other ABC News newscasts and the advice Longman gave Scott in dealing with her upcoming nuptials.

TVNewser: How was day one of the show?

Longman: Day One was incredible. This is a big new thing for Disney+—a daily show of any description, let alone news—and it all went seamlessly. It was incredible. I got in this morning at 2:30 a.m., and the team was up from midnight, so the whole team stayed up all night to make sure that we could record this from 4:15 a.m. We had 25 minutes to record it. Then we were done by five to 5:00. And then it went out and was cut and put into the system. And yeah, it was extraordinary. I mean, it just went exactly how we'd hope.

Scott: It's exciting. You could feel that sort of buzz and energy from the people, from colleagues and friends who were logging on to Disney+, seeing it featured front and center, and tuning in. We're excited for what's to come.

How does this work with you each being in Washington, D.C., or London?

Longman: Well, the whole point of it is that we are taking you with us. This is not a show where we come to sit behind a desk. We're asking the cameras to follow us while we do our work, which makes this unique. As it stands in the morning, I'll be doing a drop, which lands at 6:00 every morning on Disney+. I can record that from London, which helps me with the time zone. Actually, about six months of the year I'm on the road, and I'm usually going east, so it gets better and better for me time-wise. The point is, if I'm wherever—last month, I could have been at the Ahmedabad air crash, I could have been in Iraq, or I could have been in Israel—so we're giving you news in under 10 minutes, but also a little bit of our experience from where we are. Rachel will be able to do the same thing from D.C., following the president everywhere he goes.

Scott: Yeah, I'm excited about it. Initially, when we were thinking of this show and designing it, I thought, "Okay, will I be racing from the White House to the studio? And then back

to the White House and back to the studio?" Some days, there will be some of that, but sometimes the White House and the news that the president has is the biggest story of the day, and if that's the case, you'll see me over at the White House. If he goes on a foreign trip, you'll see me out there anchoring the show from there, too, which is exciting.

What separates the program from the other ABC shows?

Scott: Well, I think you're still going to see the same context and analysis that you get watching any of our ABC News programs from Good Morning America in the morning to World News Tonight and Nightline and ABC News Live. I could go on and on, but what I think is different about this show is that, No. 1, it's going to be on Disney+. It's designed to be under 10 minutes. So, you give us 10 minutes, and we'll tell you what you need to know. It's going to be the top headlines, the news that you need to know for the day. But also, we're going to get into some of the buzz that's happening as well. Some of the video trends and viral videos that you're seeing. I think it's going to be really what people are looking for if they're looking to get read-in very quickly for the day.

Longman: Because it's on streaming, we do have one ad break, but we're not constrained in the same ways as linear is, where you have specific blocks that you need to time out. We can change the show within those 7 to 10 minutes. We can change the show, really, the whole form of it. We can lean into some stories for longer. We can be quicker elsewhere, so it has less of a formula, if you like, and it means that we can be free-flowing with what we're doing. And I think that lends itself to a kind of very modern conversation with the audience.

How did you end up working on this project?

Longman: I think, both in our own ways, we have been trying to figure out how to reach people where they are. ABC is a

juggernaut. I heard the Good Morning America phrase when I was a kid growing up in London. I remember I was maybe nine or 10, and I was aware of it as a thing. Audiences are there, but they're moving to lots of other platforms, and we've just got to figure out ways to access those audiences, too. We've got to figure out new and exciting ways to reach people. Good Morning America, World News, all these shows are on Disney+, and we want to make something which is tailored for Disney+ too, and I think it's cool.

Scott: Just picking up on where James left off, it is exciting to think about where we could take the show. Talking to my friends, they do want to see news where they're already watching their favorite shows, and a lot of times that's on ABC. They're tuning in to Good Morning America or World News Tonight, and sometimes that's on Disney+ or Hulu. So, I love this idea that we are going to be able to have this show on a platform where there's already a large ABC News audience, but even more so, people who want to get read in quickly and just want those top headlines.

What interesting non-work things have you learned about each other during this process?

Longman: I've found out Rachel's getting married, so I've been trying to give Rachel some advice on planning something like that and having the kind of job that she does, because it is relentless. My one piece of advice is on your actual day, take your phone and put it away, and don't look at it.

Scott: You know, it's so funny because we obviously have seen each other on TV and have tremendous respect for one another and talk about news stories via e-mail or text and send encouraging messages, but we've never really been in the same place. Building this show has been fun because we have gotten this chance to get to know each other. One thing that I enjoyed is the James that you see, who is fearlessly going

into these foreign countries and these conflict zones and is so determined to deliver to the American people the story of what's happening, also has a little bit of a different side, which is fun. I also learned today that you have a dog.

Longman: It's quite funny that we both come from opposite ends of the Newsroom, and we both have completely different life experiences. Yet, what we've realized is we both want the same things from this project, which is to make something that is important to us journalistically but is also going to reform the way people consume news on digital and on streaming.

Recommended videos

<https://www.adweek.com/tvnewser/abc-news-james-longman-rachel-scott-new-disney-newscast/>