NBC Peacock is Comcast’s dive into the crazy streaming-video fray

Enlarge / An artist’s approximation of what today’s newly announced *Saved by the Bell* reboot might look like, since it will include at least some original series actors.
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The streaming fragmentation war continues apace, and today’s new contender comes from Comcast—specifically, its NBCUniversal subsidiary, which finally took the wraps off its NBC Peacock service on Tuesday after months of rumors.

The official site is currently scarce on details, but NBCUniversal has begun distributing a massive list of expected new and legacy series coming to Peacock when it launches in “April 2020.” In all, NBCUniversal estimates “15,000 hours” of content on that day-one launch. No pricing information is yet attached.

To review: Peacock is just the latest to join the likes of existing “mainstream” services Hulu, Netflix, Amazon Video, YouTube TV, and CBS All Access, as well as this November’s Disney+ and Apple TV+ and next year’s HBO Max. That doesn’t even count the proliferation of “niche” streaming services ranging from the anime-focused Crunchyroll to the proudly pretentious Criterion.

Brave old reboots

What makes up so many hours of NBCUniversal content? A brand-new *Battlestar Galactica* reboot is the obvious excitement point around these parts, of course. The other major sci-fi offering in today's news is an adaptation of Aldous Huxley's 1932 novel *Brave New World*, but its unproven cast and showrunner (David Wiener, who's worked on a *Walking Dead* TV spinoff) don't currently inspire a ton of confidence.

Two other Peacock-exclusive reboots headline today's news: *Saved by the Bell* and *Punky Brewster*. Both promise to bring back those series' original child stars. In *Punky*'s case, actor Soleil Moon Frye returns to the titular role as a "single mom of three." Meanwhile, *Saved by the Bell* promises to bring back at least two original actors, and… well, let's just read the exact series pitch, because you wouldn't believe me if I paraphrased it:

> *When California governor Zack Morris gets into hot water for closing too many low-income high schools, he proposes they send the affected students to the highest-performing schools in the state—including Bayside High. The influx of new students gives the overprivileged Bayside kids a much needed and hilarious dose of reality.*

(Maybe they should call it *Saved by the DeVos*?) Weirdly, that series' description doesn't mention original Zack actor Mark-Paul Gosselaar, but rather cameo roles from Mario Lopez (Slater) and Elizabeth Berkley (Jessie). Simply for chaos' sake, I'm going to keep my fingers crossed that they somehow cast Dustin Diamond (Screech) in the new Zack-as-governator role.

The rest of today's list includes a mix of scripted, talk-show, and "reality" fare, with existing network series *AP Bio* getting shuffled to the Peacock side of things. Some new shows

are simply listed as “pilot,” perhaps indicating that they’ll only get an April 2020 tease before having a fuller slate of episodes revealed later. We also don’t know if the service will dump entire series at launch for the sake of stream-binging or whether Peacock will operate more like a traditional TV network with a once-a-week drop for its comedy and drama series. Really, we have no idea how the service will work—or how parent company Comcast will get Comcastic in terms of required hardware, cable-TV subscriptions, or Comcast member discounts.

Classic series—and a few will have to wait

In terms of legacy series, we have the following list of English-language content expected to launch on Peacock in April. While many of these are NBC classics, a few of these series were made famous on networks like CBS and Fox, but NBCUniversal likely owns the distribution rights.

- *Bates Motel*
- *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*
- *Cheers*
- *Chrisley Knows Best*
- *Covert Affairs*
- *Downton Abbey*
- *Everybody Loves Raymond*
- *Frasier*
- *Friday Night Lights*
- *House*
- *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*
- *The King of Queens*
- *Married… with Children*
- *Monk*
- *Parenthood*
- *Psych*

- *The Real Housewives*
- *Royal Pains*
- *Saturday Night Live*
- *Superstore*
- *30 Rock*
- *Top Chef*
- *Will & Grace*

We already knew NBCUniversal was planning its own streaming service, as the company had announced in June that it had secured rights to airing *The Office* online—taking the series away from its current domestic streaming home of Netflix. Since that deal doesn't expire until January 2021, today's announcement confirms that Peacock will have to wait before stomping into Scranton. A similar exclusivity deal will prevent *Parks & Recreation* from launching on Peacock until October 2020.

One interesting tidbit buried in the news: three film studios are lined up to create "original movies" exclusive to the service. Those are all Comcast subsidiaries: Universal Pictures, Focus Features, and DreamWorks Animation. We can't imagine Universal will relegate its upcoming Super Mario film to streaming-exclusive status, but we'll have to wait to hear exactly what films they relegate to the Peacock bin.

All of this comes at almost the perfect corporate timing in terms of Disney acquiring a majority stake in Hulu this May, where series like *Brooklyn 99* have resided for some time. Clearly, Comcast took its Hulu stake buyout as an opportunity to build its own rival paid service, and an 11-month period between series development and launch is standard for network television.

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