

SmartLess is leaving Amazon for \$100 million

SiriusXM has inked a multiyear deal with SmartLess Media for exclusive rights around the flagship podcast hosted by Will Arnett, Jason Bateman, and Sean Hayes as well as a number of other SmartLess shows. The three-year deal cost the satellite radio giant a total of \$100 million, anonymous sources told *Bloomberg*, and brings the popular hosts into SiriusXM's celebrity-packed roster, which includes Howard Stern, Kevin Hart, and Conan O'Brien.

This also means that the flagship *SmartLess* podcast and SmartLess Media will no longer be under the wing of Amazon. In 2021, Amazon paid what *Bloomberg* reported was anywhere between \$60 and \$80 million for exclusive rights to *SmartLess* and any future shows developed by its podcast network. Under the deal, members of Amazon Music and Amazon-owned Wondery had access to new episodes a week early, as well as other exclusive content.

SiriusXM members will also have early, ad-free access to *SmartLess*, as well as three other podcasts that are part of the SmartLess Media podcast network: *Just Jack & Jill*, *Bad Dates*, and *Owned*. SiriusXM also gains exclusive global ad sales rights to those podcasts. Just like under the current deal with Amazon, new podcast episodes will later be released widely on all podcast players. But it appears that *SmartLess* fans will no longer be able to access most older episodes for free on their player of choice; the complete catalogs of the four SmartLess podcasts will only be available on SiriusXM.

"The majority of the 'SmartLess' library will be available exclusively to SiriusXM, making it the only destination for fans to access the podcast's complete catalog," SiriusXM wrote

in its announcement.

Podcast exclusivity deals have fallen out of favor over the past couple of years, though they were certainly popular for a while. But locking a podcast to a single service or platform often leads to a drop in audience. Companies have since reversed course, sometimes opting for deals that secure perks like bonus or ad-free content for their subscribers in lieu of total exclusivity. Spotify last fall launched both the Spotify Original *What Now? with Trevor Noah* and the second season of the fiction podcast *Case 63* widely. Although SiriusXM paid \$150 million to acquire Conan O'Brien's podcast company TeamCoco, podcasts like *Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend* are available widely.

In the case of SiriusXM and SmartLess, exclusive access to its entire podcast library is one additional perk the satellite radio giant can give its subscribers without completely limiting the show's growth. The *SmartLess* podcast frequently tops the podcast charts (it's currently ranked #8 on Apple Podcasts and #27 on Spotify). Given that new episodes will continue to be released widely, *SmartLess* will still have access to the same audience, though it'll lose the plays from fans listening to older episodes on other players. And it may tap into a different audience at SiriusXM, specifically on the new app it debuted last fall in order to court younger listeners.

<https://www.theverge.com/2024/1/29/24054940/smartless-media-departs-amazon-signs-multi-year-exclusive-pact-with-siriusxm-one-hundred-million>