

YouTube Will Double Its Original Programming in 2020, Focusing on Documentaries



Last May, YouTube made a major shift to its original programming strategy, putting all of its original shows free in front of its paywall and streaming them with advertising—a move that was inspired by an Adweek cover story on Cobra Kai, YouTube chief business officer Robert Kyncl said last May. Less than a year later, the platform has plans to double its original output while continuing to offer both ad-supported (free) and ad-free (subscription) options.

“We are really pleased with this new direction and for what it means for our fans and for our business,” YouTube global head of original content Susanne Daniels said at the Television Critics Association’s winter press tour in Pasadena, Calif.

YouTube has more than 100 new original projects in the works for 2020, Daniels said, double the 50 original series and films it released last year. And while YouTube Originals is moving forward with the third season of scripted series Cobra Kai, Liza On Demand and Kevin Hart: What The Fit, much of its

upcoming programming is nonfiction.

The company has recently released *The Age of AI*, an eight-episode science and tech series hosted by Robert Downey Jr., and has a docuseries following musician Justin Bieber slated for a Jan. 27 release. YouTube is also readying several documentary films, including *Creators for Change*, a four-part series produced by Vox Media Studios whose first installment will feature former first lady Michelle Obama and three YouTube creators learning about adolescent girls' education around the world.

Other documentaries in the works include one about Coachella, another centered on Paris Hilton and a six-part series following women gymnasts that is slated to premiere ahead of the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo.

YouTube Originals will also continue programming live events, following five livestreamed specials in 2019. This fall, magician David Blaine will perform a live magic event on the platform, Daniels said Saturday, although details about the stunt remain under wraps. And the service will have a four-part reality competition series hosted by makeup influencer James Charles.

YouTube's original output stands in stark contrast to its user-generated programming, which has time after time generated controversy for the platform both from the general public and from marketers concerned about brand safety. The originals slate is tightly focused on learning, personalities and music events, Daniels said, which is informed in part by the types of programming viewers watch across the platform.

"From learning to personality-driven content and music events, we're focused on amplifying the best of what YouTube has to offer globally," Daniels said.

<https://www.adweek.com/tv-video/youtube-will-double-its-original-programming-in-2020-focusing-on-documentaries/>