

# Disney+ has its classics, plus Marvel and 'Star Wars,' but no R-rated films, little bingeing

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Credit: CC0 Public Domain

The company that got its fame from a 1928 silent cartoon short featuring an animated mouse is betting the bank on a new streaming future with Disney+, which launches Tuesday.

Disney CEO and Chairman Robert Iger calls the new subscription video service "the biggest project" undertaken by the company under his tenure. The entertainment giant invested \$1 billion in programming alone, in an attempt to make Disney+ a must buy for consumers.

How so? For starters, all movies produced by Disney from 2019 and beyond—such as "Frozen 2" and "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker"—will air exclusively on Disney+ after their theatrical and home video runs. To stoke demand for the service, those movies are unlikely to air anytime soon on Disney-owned ABC, the Disney Channel, the Freeform or FX channels, or any other pay cable network.

## **Disney+ launch: Here's everything you need to know about new streaming service**

Disney+ (DisneyPlus.com), which went live early today, is stocked with nearly 500 movies and 7,500 TV episodes from shows within its core brands.

That's evident in its Apple-influenced interface (at least as seen on Roku early Tuesday morning). There's a black backdrop, where the iTunes movies and TV shows menus had gray and pastel-colored backgrounds—dominated by those five logos: Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars and National Geographic. The latter is among Disney's most recent acquisition, 21st Century Fox, which includes National Geographic.

Click any of the icons and you'll be transported to an area devoted to that studio's content. The Disney section welcomes you with the familiar animation of the Magic Castle; the Pixar section with its iconic bouncing desk lamp.

Billboarded atop those icons are clickable suggested jewels from the Disney's abundance of content riches: "Avatar," "Avengers: Endgame," "The Simpsons," "Captain Marvel," and new entrants created exclusively for Disney+ such as "High School Musical: The Musical: The Series."

Similar to Netflix and Amazon's video streaming services, Disney+ has categories such as "Recommended For You," "Hit Movies," "Trending," "Continue Watching," "Originals," and—here's where Disney will shine—"Out of the Vault."

Just browse along the offerings from Disney's vault: "The Lion King," "Aladdin," "Beauty and the Beast," "The Little Mermaid," "The Jungle Book," "Cinderella," "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." The list goes on. It's a whole new world of streaming ... if you are a lover of all things Disney.

But not everything created by Disney's roster of studios will appear on its new streaming rival to Netflix.

Disney+ will not show films that are R-rated, for instance. "There will be nothing on Disney+ that's not branded or family friendly," Kevin Mayer, the chairman of Disney's direct to consumer division, said during a recent preview event at the Disney studios here.

Instead, Disney is positioning Hulu as the adult streaming alternative to Disney+, and it will likely be the home, Mayer says, for R-rated content such as the "Deadpool" films, produced by Fox but starring Marvel characters.

Hulu, begun as primarily a consortium of three broadcast networks—NBC, ABC and Fox—is now majority-owned by Disney. Fox's stake was part of Disney's \$71 billion acquisition of the Fox movie and TV studios, which became official earlier this year. Also earlier this

year, the Disney-controlled Hulu paid \$1.4 billion for the 9.5% stake owned by AT&T.

Also, for completists, there are a few selections currently absent in the Disney+ library including "Avengers: Infinity War," "Star Wars: The Last Jedi," and "Solo: A Star Wars Story." But those titles will find their home in the service soon, Disney says.

At the preview, journalists got to try out the Disney+ app on iPads, iPhones and Apple TV. A search through the Disney animated film classics showed most of the expected titles mentioned above—but not the controversial "Song of the South," long derided by critics as a racist revisionist history of slaves in the south.

However, Disney is chock full of content from the library, including the old Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck cartoons, live-action nature documentaries produced by Walt Disney in the 1950s, a new live-action Star Wars series, "The Mandalorian," new reboots of Disney Channel fare like "Lizzie McGuire" and "High School Musical" and a new, live-action re-do of "Lady and the Tramp," featuring real dogs in place of the animated characters.

What you won't be able to do on Disney+, at least at launch, is binge on multiple episodes of new series, as you can on Netflix. New episodes will drop, one by one, each Friday at 12:01 a.m. PT.

How spoiled us bingers are was immediately apparent early Tuesday after the end of the first episode of "The Mandalorian." The well-paced and impressive first episode will likely leave viewers wanting an immediate second helping of the Star Wars-based series. Instead, viewers might be suggested a revisiting of 1980's "The Empire Strikes Back."

Some good news: Folks who start watching Tuesday will get two episodes of new shows this week, with the second airing on Friday.

Disney+ costs \$6.99 monthly, an aggressive price move that's almost half of the most popular tier for No. 1 streamer Netflix, and \$2 more than Apple TV +, which just launched Nov. 1.

The family-oriented channel is also available as a bundle, with ESPN+ and Hulu, for \$12.99 monthly. New customers to Verizon cable TV, broadband or cellular service can get Disney+ free for one year, too.

Disney+ will be available on most of the usual streaming devices, including Roku, Amazon Fire TV, Apple TV, Google Chromecast and assorted TVs with smart TV functionality.

Disney executives predict the new service will have between 60 million to 90 million subscribers by 2024, and that Hulu, now at 28 million subscribers, will grow to 40 to 60 million subscribers.

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