

Disney pulls blockbuster from French cinemas in streaming row

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Jake Gyllenhaal leads the cast in the English version of 'Strange World', due for release in November.

Disney will not release blockbuster animation "Strange World" in French cinemas, it said Wednesday, in protest against the country's strict

streaming rules.

Under French law, the company's streaming platform, Disney+, would have to wait 17 months to show the movie after its release in cinemas, which had been due in November.

Disney told AFP it would instead send "Strange World" straight to streaming and skip cinemas entirely, confirming reports by movie website Deadline and French paper Les Echos.

Helene Etzi, Disney France president, told Les Echos that France's rules were "unfair, constraining and poorly adapted to audience demands."

"Strange World" is one of its most-anticipated releases of the year, with Jake Gyllenhaal voicing the lead character in the English version of the fantasy adventure tale.

France has tried to prevent streaming platforms from undermining its large [cinema](#) network and the TV stations—notably Canal Plus—that finance many of its films and get a shorter wait for prime releases.

The National Federation of French Cinemas said it "protested with the greatest vigour against Disney's desire to deprive the French of its Christmas animated film."

The debate over how long to wait between cinema and streaming releases has also been fierce in Hollywood—though with much shorter delays being considered.

After trying various strategies at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the US industry has settled on 45 days as the optimum gap.

Scarlett Johansson sued Disney last year for loss of earnings after it

released "Black Widow" simultaneously to cinemas and streamers.

Director Denis Villeneuve said the same move by Warner Bros for his sci-fi blockbuster "Dune" showed "absolutely no love for cinema".

Even a 45-day window was reportedly not enough for Tom Cruise, who is rumoured to have launched [legal action](#) against Paramount to get a longer delay for his next "Mission: Impossible" instalment next year.

So far, Disney has no plans to pull "Lightyear" from French cinemas—the "Toy Story" spin-off is due later this month.

But the fate of other massive productions—including sequels to "Black Panther" and "Avatar"—rests in the balance.

"We continue to evaluate the situation film by film and country by country," said Disney's Etzi.

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