



All access

Last year will be made into endless films after Covid-19 gripped the world and changed our lives forever. One secondary shift was the rise in home entertainment streaming services, as the global population was forced to stay away from cinemas

While the entertainment industry grappled with global restrictions, closed studios and sets, grounded talent, slashed budgets and face coverings, streaming giants Netflix, Disney+ and Amazon Prime moved ever-closer to the big picture driving seat. Amazon in particular continued its

relentless diversified pursuit on the domination of everything, from its early days as a book distributor to today's holistic home-delivery service that includes drone drops, food and beverages and now, of course, entertainment streaming.

With shifting sands, some of Hollywood's darlings and the cinematic heroes of yesteryear

featured in *The Irishman*, which was released for Christmas 2019 on Netflix after a limited theatrical release and a premier at the 57th New York Film Festival. The American epic crime drama film directed and produced by Martin Scorsese and written by Steven Zaillian, stars Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, and Joe Pesci. Netflix also released *The Social Dilemma* in 2020, a factional dramatisation of the challenges society faces with the rise of the Smart Phone and social media. *Diana: A New Musical* is expected to premiere in early 2021, a filmed version of the Broadway musical about the life of Princess Diana arriving on Netflix. netflix.com

Owned and operated by the Media and Entertainment Distribution division of The Walt Disney Company, Disney+

debuted in November 2019 in the US, just months before the global pandemic broke. It expanded globally through 2020, with 86.8 million subscribers as of December. You won't find any third-party content on Disney+, but Disney's giant library spans back to the 1930s, including movies and TV shows from Disney-owned studios and franchises including 21st Century Fox, Marvel, Pixar, National Geographic, Star Wars and more. There's also a growing library of original content, some of which is based on these popular franchises. Disney+ also took out the most-streamed film of the 2020, with stage show *Hamilton*, a 2020 American historical revisionist musical film comprising a live stage recording of the 2015 Broadway musical. It was originally planned for theatrical release in October, 2021, but the film was released digitally worldwide via Disney+ in July 2020 and met with great acclaim for its visuals, performances, and direction. ➤ disneyplus.com

Left: Disney+ has a monopoly over Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars and National Geographic





The Walt Disney Company also owns sports-oriented ESPN+. ESPN+ includes select live basketball, ice hockey, baseball and soccer, as well as PGA golf, Top Rank Boxing, and Grand Slam tennis matches. ESPN also owns exclusive rights to UFC pay-per-views, making ESPN+ the only place where you can stream the promotion's biggest matches. In addition to live sports, ESPN+ also includes a wide variety of classic and original ESPN content, including hit sports documentaries like the new Michael Jordan series *The Last Dance*, the complete, Academy Award-winning *O.J. Simpson: Made in America* series, and the Tom Brady documentary *The Man in the Arena* set for 2021.

Amazon is throwing its weight (and billions of dollars) behind plenty of big-budget original content such as *The Grand Tour* (Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond, James May in another *Top Gear* iteration), and a new adaptation of *Lord of the Rings*, coming in 2021. Amazon bought the television rights for the famous J.R. Tolkien series for \$250 million in November 2017, making a five-season production commitment worth at least \$1 billion to tell new stories set before *The Hobbit* and

The Lord of the Rings, based on Tolkien's descriptions of events of the Second Age of Middle-earth. This would make it the most expensive television series ever.

Amazon has also gone into live sport streaming and behind-the-scenes documentaries with its *All or Nothing* series' on NFL and soccer teams, and *The Test*, which followed the Australian cricket team after the infamous ball-tampering scandal. It is known to be pursuing Indian cricket rights, and has even made a move into Tesla and Google territory with a self-driving robotaxi. [amazon.com/prime-video](https://www.amazon.com/prime-video)

Now Rupert Murdoch media Sky Group is getting in on the act, with a deal in Europe to

make Amazon's Prime Video streaming package available to its millions of subscribers, giving access to content from the Premier League to the superhero drama as part of their TV service. This means Sky also has a deal in place with Disney+ and Netflix as entertainment giants continue to throw big rocks and risk cannibalisation in search of a monopoly.

Amazon's syndicated content is comparable to other services, with plenty of popular TV and Hollywood films, including classic series such as *Seinfeld*.

Like Amazon, Apple is throwing cash at original content in attempts to draw audiences in with "must watch" shows,



including *The Morning Show* with Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon. AppleTV+ has no third-party content at all; an interesting move as Apple is quite new to the production game. [apple.com/tv](https://www.apple.com/tv)

With the rise of the Marvel Cinematic Universe franchise, the face of cinema has changed in recent years regardless, with animated pictures taking off in a series of comic book hero spin-offs, featuring the voices (only) of our greatest actors. This was another tremendous business move from The Walt Disney Company which acquired Marvel Entertainment in 2009.

Watch this space in 2021, with Cinema set to fight back in with some of its heaviest hitters, including a 25th outing for James Bond in April with *No Time to Die*. But with a nudge from the often cataclysmic coronavirus pandemic, the lights are starting to flicker and before too long cinema may only be a place for nostalgia. ■

Above: DeNiro was among an all-star cast in Netflix film *The Irishman*, while Bond returns to cinemas in 2021 **Left:** Disney's ESPN+ documentary on Tom Brady will air this year