

International launch set for Disney+ streaming service

The Walt Disney Company said on Monday its streaming television service will debut in November in the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the Netherlands. Offering film and TV entertainment including its "Star Wars" and Marvel franchises as well as its ABC content and an extensive library acquired from 21st Century Fox, Disney+ hopes to be a major challenger to Netflix.

It will launch in Canada, Netherlands, and the US on November 12, and in Australia and New Zealand a week later, the company said, and is expected to expand to most major markets within the following two years. The entertainment giant also announced deals for Disney+ to

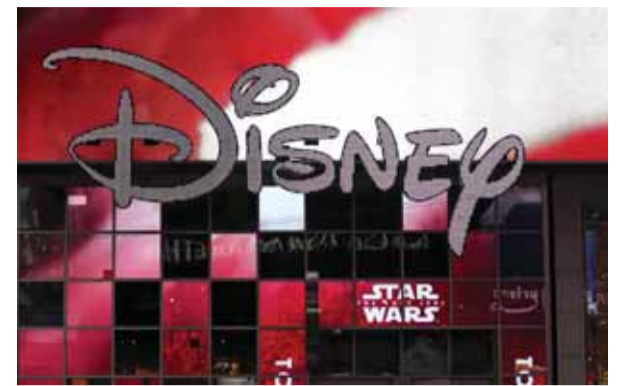
be available on Apple, Google, Microsoft, Roku and Sony internet-linked devices.

Chief executive Bob Iger said during a recent earnings call the company would take advantage of its control of Hulu to bundle an ad-supported version of the streaming television service with Disney+ and ESPN in the US for a monthly subscription price of \$12.99. Iger said Disney was "focused on leveraging Fox's vast library of great titles... for example reimagining 'Home Alone,' 'Night at the Museum,' 'Cheaper by the Dozen,' and 'Diary of a Wimpy Kid' for a new generation on Disney+."

Former Fox superhero movie franchises including "X-Men," "Fantastic 4" and "Deadpool" will now come

under the Marvel umbrella, Iger said, adding that parent company Disney sees "great long-term value" in the titles. The increasingly competitive TV streaming marketplace will soon feature HBO Max, Apple and NBCUniversal platforms as well as Netflix and Amazon Prime. Disney+ will launch at a subscription price of \$6.99 monthly in the US. — AFP

In this file photo the Disney logo is displayed outside the Disney Store in Times Square in New York City. — AFP



In this file photo singer Billie Eilish performs onstage at the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles, California. — AFP photos



In this file photo Lil Nas X performs onstage during the 2019 BET awards at Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles, California.

'Old Town Road' finally dethroned from US top singles chart

Lil Nas X has finally been dethroned after 19 weeks atop the US charts, Billboard announced on Monday, with pop star Billie Eilish besting his viral hit "Old Town Road." Eilish's song "Bad Guy" spent nine nonconsecutive weeks in second place before finally unseating overnight sensation Lil Nas X's infectious country-trap smash. "congratulations to billie eilish!! u deserve this!!" tweeted the 19-year-old rapper on Monday. Like Lil Nas X, Eilish soared to fame over the past few months after releasing an acclaimed debut album "When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?" in March.

Prior to its release, Eilish, a goth-inspired 17-year-old who is the first musician born in the 2000s to top the Billboard Hot 100, had already won a fervent online fan-

base for her bold pop style that features heavy bass and tinges of trap and EDM. "Congratulations @billieeilish Well deserved. Your persistence paid off. Thanks everybody. It was a hell of a ride," tweeted country star Billy Rae Cyrus, whose remix with Lil Nas X had ushered along the meteoric success of "Old Town Road."

A previously unknown Atlanta rapper, Lil Nas X last month broke the record of 16 weeks on the industry's most closely watched singles chart. That was set by 1995's "One Sweet Day" by Mariah Carey and Boyz II Men and matched by the 2017 Latin juggernaut "Despacito" by Luis Fonsi, Daddy Yankee and Justin Bieber. — AFP

Elton John blasts 'relentless' character assassination of Harry and Meghan

Elton John has spoken out in support of Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, calling them a down-to-earth and hardworking couple who were being unfairly attacked by the media after they took private jets to stay with him in southern France. John recalled his friendship with Harry's mother, the late Princess Diana, in a series of tweets on Monday in which he appealed to the press to stop the almost daily "relentless and untrue assassinations on their character."

The "Rocketman" singer was responding to criticism in Britain over two recent vacations taken by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex and their three-month-old baby Archie to Spain, and to the south of France, where the couple stayed at John's villa in Nice. Britain's Sun newspaper at the weekend blasted the royal couple - Queen Elizabeth's grandson and his American wife, a former actress - as hypocritical "eco warriors" for flying on private jets despite voicing concerns over the environment and conservation. "Dumbo Jet," read the headline of the Sun on Sunday's front-page splash on Harry and Meghan's travels, with a picture caption cracking a joke about "their miles".

John said he was "deeply distressed by (the) distorted and malicious account in the press" around their Nice visit last week. He added he provided Harry and Meghan with a private jet to his home for security reasons but said a contribution was made to Carbon Footprint Ltd, which offsets carbon emissions by funding environmentally friendly projects. But some environmental campaigners said such trips should be cut out altogether. "An airliner is over ten times as polluting as a modern train, and private jets are ten times more polluting still," Greenpeace UK's Paul Morozzo said.

"It's vitally important that all frequent fliers reduce the number of flights they take if we are to confront the climate emergency." In separate remarks, US talk show host DeGeneres said on Twitter she had met and talked with Harry and Meghan in England about their work on wildlife conservation. "They were the most down-to-earth, compassionate people. Imagine being attacked for everything you do, when all you're trying to do is make

the world better," she wrote. Harry and Meghan's wedding in May 2018 was marked by an outpouring of affection in Britain but less than a year later the couple have found themselves on the receiving end of a barrage of negative stories in the media. They have ranged from the \$3 million cost of renovating their new home to reports dubbing Meghan "Duchess Difficult."



Prince Harry and Meghan

While much reporting by the British press on the royal family is respectful, verging on the sycophantic, at other times it can be harshly critical, even cruel. The couple have not publicly responded to the various attacks on them, but took to Instagram to post a message of positivity. "Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world," the post said, quoting anti-apartheid activist Desmond Tutu. But that too was swiftly criticized. "Your little bit of good might be flying on commercial rather than always private," user Dale Strickland commented. "Remember that footprint you both talk about." — Reuters



Actor Javier Bardem holds a banner for Greenpeace as he poses for photos in Times in New York. — AFP

'Save our oceans,' Oscar winner Bardem tells UN

Oscar-winning actor Javier Bardem made an impassioned plea at the United Nations to save the world's oceans Monday. The Spaniard, a keen environmental activist, called on countries to agree to a treaty that would protect at least 30 percent of seas by 2030. "We just can't afford to get it wrong," he told an intergovernmental meeting at the UN's headquarters in New York. "Whatever happens during this conference will have a deep impact on the life of our oceans and on the future of humankind."

"Delegates must know that the world is watching," added Bardem, who won an

Academy Award for his role in 2007 film "No Country for Old Men." Bardem spoke as a representative of Greenpeace, which is campaigning for the Global Ocean Treaty being discussed at the UN. The environmental group says the UN's 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea does not go far enough to protect the planet's oceans. It wants a network of sanctuaries to protect marine life that goes beyond national jurisdictions. Governments hope to agree on the treaty sometime next year. — AFP

Robbie reveals 'surreal' script read of Once Upon A Time In Hollywood

Margot Robbie opened up about her "surreal" first read of the "Once Upon A Time In Hollywood" script at Quentin Tarantino's house. The 29-year-old actress - who portrays Sharon Tate in the acclaimed director's ninth film, which runs at 2h 45m - was only allowed to read the screenplay in the 56-year-old filmmaker's kitchen while he watched TV in another room. In an interview with Empire magazine, she

said: "It was like, 'You can sit and read it and then I'm taking it back.' It was seriously one of the most surreal moments in my life, sitting at his kitchen bench. There was one copy of the script and it had his writing on it."

"I'm such a slow reader, so I was there for like four hours 'cause it was also really, really long. He's like, 'I'm just watching Dexter.' 'I would've thought he'd be watching some obscure Italian Western or something, but he was like, 'No, I'm really into Dexter right now.' "So he kept hopping back in to the kitchen being like, 'Are you done yet?' And I'm like, 'No, I'm halfway!'" The "Wolf of Wall Street" star went on to explain that one of the things that impressed her the most about Quentin was his "amazing beer knowledge". She said: "He was like, 'Do you need anything?' I'd been there for so long by that point, reading. 'I was like, 'Can I have a beer please?' And he's like, 'I've got a VB,' which is a very Australian beer that I've never seen outside of Australia ever in my life. "Interactions like that with Quentin seem to happen all the time where he just says something so flippantly and you're like, wait, what? "People credit him often for his film knowledge, (but) they're totally failing to recognize his amazing beer knowledge." — Bang Showbiz



Margot Robbie



Aml Ameen joins Charming the Hearts of Men

Aml Ameen has joined 'Charming the Hearts of Men'. The 34-year-old actor - who is best known for his roles in 2006 crime drama 'Kidulthood' and ITV television series 'The Bill' - has joined the cast of the upcoming indie romance, which is set in a "politically-charged era", alongside Kelsey Grammer. The new film has been written by Susan DeRose, who will also helm the project; while Richard T. Lewis will produce and cameras will roll this August in Georgia. The movie is set in 1964 and will centre on the creation of legislation which led to the Time's Up movement today.

The film has been described as a "fictional account inspired by true events that altered the world for women in America and deals with the discrimination that both black and white women suffered". 'Frasier' star Kelsey, 64, is set to play Southern Congressman Worth - who meets Grace Gordon, a woman who has returned home due to the sudden death of her father to find herself in a society with "little hope and virtually no power without a male provider" and the pair embarks on a mission to change society for the better.

Emotions stir in Jerusalem as HBO's 'Our Boys' hits local airwaves

A new HBO series on the killing of a Palestinian youth after three Israeli teens were murdered in a deadly summer five years ago is stirring up painful memories for bereaved families on both sides of the conflict. "Our Boys", which premiered in Israel and the United States last week, centers on Mohammed Abu Khdeir, a 16-year-old Palestinian who was abducted near his East Jerusalem home and burned to death by three Israelis, two of them also teenagers, in July 2014. "I wish I could reach into the screen and grab hold of my son," Abu Khdeir's mother, Suha, told Reuters, her voice breaking, soon after watching the first two episodes of the series, a co-production of HBO and Israel's Keshet International and produced by Movie Plus.

"The show brought me right back to the pain, to the day he was kidnapped," she said. Prosecutors said Abu Khdeir's convicted killers were avenging the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teens - Naftali Frankel, Gilad Sha'er and Eyal Yifrah - in the occupied West Bank two weeks earlier by members of the Islamist group Hamas. The deaths of the four youths spiraled into a seven-week war between Israel and Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip. HBO's 10-episode dramatization dissects Israel's internal investigation into the three ultra-Orthodox Jews eventually convicted of Abu Khdeir's murder and the frantic initial days after his parents learned of his disappearance and death.

The Hebrew- and Arabic-language series was written,

directed and produced by two Jewish Israelis and an Arab Israeli, who mix documentary footage with live production to delve into the micro details they say drive the conflict. "We live in an extremely nuanced world where wars erupt because of tiny things," co-director Joseph Cedar, 50, said in an interview alongside collaborators Hagai Levi and Tawfik Abu Wael. "We tried to peel back the layers of this hate crime," he said. But some bereaved Israeli families have said the show largely glosses over the murder of the three Israeli teens, who are referenced throughout the series but not included as characters.

Two Hamas suspects in the murders were killed in a 2014 shootout and in 2015 an Israeli court sentenced a third Hamas member to three life terms for the teens'

abduction and murder. "The balance is not clear to someone viewing the show, who thinks 'we murder them, they murder us,'" said Merav Hajaj, whose daughter, an army officer, was killed along with three other cadets in a Palestinian truck ramming attack in Jerusalem in 2017. Hajaj, 49, wrote a letter signed by some 120 bereaved Israeli families criticizing HBO and requesting the program list the number of Israelis killed in Palestinian attacks through the years. Levi said the creators felt they had portrayed the context of Abu Khdeir's killing. "But the crime is the story," he said. — Reuters