

Criterion Collection extends Hulu streaming deal

April 15 2014, by Jake Coyle



This undated file photo made available by the press office Punto e Virgola shows Toni Servillo in a scene from "The Great Beauty." The Criterion Collection will kick off its new chapter with Hulu with the digital release Tuesday, April 15, 2014, of the Oscar-winning Italian film. Criterion and Hulu have extended their deal to keep the video platform the exclusive streaming home of Criterion's vast library of art house films. (AP Photo/Punto e Virgola Press Office, Gianni Fiorito, File)

The Criterion Collection and Hulu have extended their deal to keep the

video platform as the exclusive streaming home of Criterion's vast library of art house films.

Terms of the deal, revealed exclusively to The Associated Press, weren't disclosed, but both Hulu and Criterion said it will run for several years.

Since 2011, Criterion Collection films have streamed exclusively on Hulu Plus, Hulu's monthly subscription streaming service. In a fractured streaming landscape, the partnership has been a rarity, making Hulu Plus the digital home to more than 800 movies in Criterion's singular collection.

"It was important to us that Criterion actually have a home and have a strong central locus to which our audience could gather and know they were finding the breadth of the library," said Peter Becker, president of the Criterion Collection.

For many movie buffs, the Criterion Collection is synonymous with the greatest classics of world cinema, from "L'Avventura" to "Seven Samurai." Criterion is known for its lavish DVD and Blu-ray packages, many of which feature restorations of older films.

The Criterion-Hulu partnership is for many movie lovers the chief draw of the \$7.99-a-month Hulu Plus. The service has more than 5 million members, according to Hulu. Hulu Plus is otherwise mostly driven by television content, featuring in-season shows from NBC, ABC and Fox. The audience for Criterion titles on Hulu Plus increased by more than 25 percent from 2012 to 2013, Hulu said.

Criterion will kick off its new chapter with Hulu Plus on Tuesday with the streaming addition of the Oscar-winning Italian film "The Great Beauty." Having just come out on home video last month, it's a quick add to its streaming library. But it's a fitting one, says Becker, given

Criterion's passion for Paolo Sorrentino's movie and the film's references to other Italian classics.

"It feels like we're sort of putting it on the shelf next to the Fellinis and the Rossellinis," says Becker. "That's the way we always feel when we're adding films to the collection: We're always imagining it on the shelf."

Though Criterion films are also available for rent or download from places like iTunes and Amazon, Hulu Plus offers a digital equivalent of that library shelf. It has led to some new opportunities, like making subtitles for some films that didn't previously have them. Many films that Criterion isn't able to put out on DVD are also available only for [streaming](#). (There are 30-plus films from Japanese master Yasujiro Ozu, for example.)

To Becker, such options make it a great time to be a film lover.

"Even some things that aren't necessarily in restored shape are still worlds better than the 17th-generation VHSs that we used to have to watch," says Becker. "For real cinephiles who want to dig in and see lots of different kinds of [films](#), I don't think there's ever been a better time."

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