

DreamWorks mixing faves, newbies in YouTube debut (Update)

June 16 2014, by Ryan Nakashima



This undated image provided by DreamWorksTV shows Jenn McAllister, host of "Record Setter Kids with JennXPenn" one of more than a dozen new shows on DreamWorks TV. On Monday, June 16, 2014, AwesomenessTV movie producer Brian Robbins kicks off DreamWorks TV, a YouTube channel that represents one of the first attempts by Hollywood to mesh the polished look of movies with the chaos of content on the Internet. (AP Photo/DreamWorksTV)

When AwesomenessTV launched as a YouTube channel two years ago, it was a bet by veteran TV and movie producer Brian Robbins on the ability of teen and tween audiences to find videos they love to watch online.

On Monday, Robbins kicks off DreamWorks TV, another YouTube channel that represents one of the first attempts by Hollywood to mesh the polished look of movies with the chaos of content on the Internet.

The channel is aimed at 6 to 11 year olds and will have a mix of videos featuring characters familiar to DreamWorks Animation audiences—like "Shrek" and Po from "Kung Fu Panda"—alongside those who haven't yet made it big—like cardboard cut-out news anchors from "The Report Card."

The hope is that kids who come to watch their favorite characters will get interested in new ones that might one day become just as valuable.

Robbins compared his channel to cable TV networks such as MTV and ESPN in the 1970s and '80s. What were once fledgling networks that no one watched have now become multibillion-dollar enterprises that are the bedrocks of major media companies.

"This is really about building the cable channel of tomorrow," Robbins said in an interview. "What we think is happening digitally is that the next generation of those brands will be born out of this digital revolution that's going on."



This undated image provided by DreamWorksTV shows an image from "Jimmy Blue Shorts," one of more than a dozen new shows on DreamWorks TV. On Monday, June 16, 2014, AwesomenessTV movie producer Brian Robbins kicks off DreamWorks TV, a YouTube channel that represents one of the first attempts by Hollywood to mesh the polished look of movies with the chaos of content on the Internet. (AP Photo/DreamWorksTV)

AwesomenessTV was one of the startup channels that received a small piece of the \$100 million in seed funding that YouTube doled out to some 100 creators two years ago to develop original content for the online video platform.

Today, it is one of the few to have amassed an audience large enough to attract the attention of a major studio. DreamWorks Animation SKG Inc. bought AwesomenessTV in May 2013 for what could exceed \$100 million if the channel operator continues to hit its earnings targets. This March, The Walt Disney Co. said it would pay up to \$950 million for rival YouTube channel operator Maker Studios, a price that makes the AwesomenessTV deal seem like a bargain.

The online platform will be a relatively inexpensive way to develop hits and to forget failures.

Birk Rawlings, head of animation at DreamWorks TV, said the network will debut more than a dozen new shows in the first few weeks, including "Jimmy Blue Shorts" and "Fifi Cat Therapist." One live-action show will re-imagine the comic book character "Richie Rich," one of the hundreds of characters DreamWorks acquired when it bought Classic Media in June 2012.

Executives will tweak the lineup based on audience feedback in the form of "likes," repeat viewings and the amount of time people stick around.

The venture represents a great way for DreamWorks to try out new content and keep audiences engaged with their biggest franchises, said Peter Csathy, chief executive of Manatt Digital Media Ventures, an investor in YouTube channel network DanceOn. He said it's fine if some quickly made programming doesn't live up to the luscious imagery and vibrant animation of the DreamWorks brand.

"You don't have to wait to see if you succeed after you put hundreds of millions of dollars into 'Shrek,'" he said. "Now you can put in a fraction of that and throw spaghetti against the wall and see what sticks."

More information: "The Report Card" Episode 1: bit.ly/1mTnfUG

Behind the scenes of "The Report Card": bit.ly/1p3h0jM

"Jimmy Blue Shorts" Episode 1: bit.ly/1xWzpoD

"Record Setter Kids," Episode 1: bit.ly/1jpwZ7Z

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