

Netflix goes for laughs with new stand-up specials

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This Nov. 18, 2013 photo shows actor-comedian Bill Cosby in New York. Netflix is announcing performances by Cosby and other comedians set to roll out this fall. It's the latest in the original-content initiative from this subscription Internet channel. Taped July 12 at the San Francisco Jazz Center, "Bill Cosby 77," is an hour-plus of comedy dealing with such topics as relationships, marriage and kids. It premieres on Nov. 28. (Photo by Victoria Will/Invision/AP, File)

You can have Bill Cosby in the palm of your hand. And Jim Jefferies

will tickle you at your discretion.

Netflix is announcing performances by both comics and three more, set to roll out this fall. It's the latest in the original-content initiative from this subscription Internet channel.

Here's the lineup, unveiled Thursday, with each program going online at 3:01 a.m. Eastern:

— "Jim Jefferies: BARE," premiering Aug. 29. Taped at Boston's Wilbur Theatre, it finds Jefferies weighing in on diverse topics such as politics, new fatherhood, orgies and Neil Diamond. (It will join the first season of Jefferies' FX comedy series "Legit," now streaming on Netflix.)

— Chelsea Handler in her previously announced "Uganda Be Kidding Me Live" appearance, premiering Oct. 10. It's the culmination of an international stand-up tour by Handler (who exits her E! talk show later this month, headed for a new series on Netflix in 2016) as she recounts tales of her global travels and the ridiculous characters in her life.

— "Chelsea Peretti: One of the Greats" premieres Nov. 14. Originating from San Francisco's Palace of Fine Arts, it's a dark but silly exploration by the "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" star showcasing her talents as an actress, stand-up comic, writer and motorcycle enthusiast.

— "Bill Cosby 77," premiering Nov. 28. Taped July 12 (Cosby's 77th birthday) at the San Francisco Jazz Center, it's an hour-plus of comedy from Cos dealing with such topics as relationships, marriage and, of course, kids.

— "Bill Burr: I'm Sorry You Feel That Way," premiering Dec. 5. Burr is onstage at Atlanta's Tabernacle exploring subjects such as how nothing

ruins great sex like a rom-com and how too many childhood hugs could be the downfall of man.

"Stand-up comedy is a category of original content that we're very focused on," said Lisa Nishimura, Netflix's vice president of original documentary and comedy programming. "There's a really huge scope of types of comedy within stand-up, and we have the ability to provide that entire scope."

Going forward, Netflix expects to keep introducing stand-up specials, she said.

And while other networks regularly air stand-up programs, Nishimura said Netflix has its own appeal: "Our flexibility and ubiquity of access is a really important component, specifically for comedy."

Jefferies noted that he's done specials for HBO, Showtime and FX. But he hailed the Netflix model, which presents his concert at its original length (about 77 minutes) and will keep it available to viewers for the foreseeable future.

"When you tell people you're doing a special for a cable channel, you say they're going to air it at 8 o'clock on Saturday and again at 2 in the morning on Tuesday," he explained. "But here, all you have to say is, 'It's on Netflix.' It's easier.

"People can watch it over and over again," he pointed out, then added with a laugh, "and fast forward through the bits they don't like."

With the *Cosby* program, Netflix is staging a hasty encore for the comedy legend, who made a celebrated return to TV stand-up after 30 years last fall with his "Far From Finished" special on Comedy Central.

Cosby said he's even more pleased with his new special. For one thing, there will be no commercial breaks, allowing the flow of his performance to be uninterrupted.

In a recent conversation, he couldn't help marveling at the pace of technology that will soon deliver him anytime, on demand, from Netflix servers to countless consumer devices. When Cosby burst on the scene a half-century ago, he won widespread exposure thanks to broadcast television and his comedy LPs.

And now?

"People can get a plug-in and put my show on their huge flat-screen TVs," he said, "while other people are watching on their i-This and i-That."

When "Bill Cosby 77" goes online, he said with a chuckle, "You will have Bill Cosby in the palm of your hand." Another chuckle. "Just as he has YOU in the palm of HIS hand."

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