

Amazon win highlights blurring TV/Internet line

January 14 2015, by Sara Puig



Actor Jeffrey Tambor (4th right) and show creator Jill Soloway (4th left) with the award for Best TV Series, Comedy or Musical for "Transparent," in the press room at the Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills on January 11, 2015

The Golden Globes triumph of Amazon's online series "Transparent" highlights the increasingly blurred lines between television and the Internet. "TV and the Internet are becoming one and the same, and in a few years that line will completely dissolve," said media analyst Jeff

Brock of box officer tracker Exhibitor Relations.

"Transparent," which tells the story of a transgender father and his family, was crowned best comedy series at the Globes, a first for an online series, while its star Jeffrey Tambor won the best actor prize in the same category.

Amazon's rival, online video streaming service Netflix, meanwhile scooped the prize for best actor in a drama series, going to Kevin Spacey of political thriller "House of Cards."

Last year his on-screen partner Robin Wright earned the first major category prize for an online-only video service, starting a trend which is clearly continuing this year.

The Internet and portable electronic devices are redefining the essence of what television is, and have completely revolutionized audience expectations at the same time.

Viewers now want to watch their favorite TV show not at a fixed time imposed by TV schedulers, but where and when they want, by Video on Demand (VOD) or streaming on their television, computer, tablet or smartphone.

Growing competition

"VOD gives the consumer the option to buy what he or she wants to see. In that way it will be a far superior method of measuring popularity," said blogger Sasha Stone, founder of the www.awardsdaily.com website.

Netflix has led the way. After revolutionizing how people rent DVDs, it was the first Internet company to launch series which went on to become both critical and commercial successes, including "House of Cards" and

"Orange is the New Black," which are both in their third season.



Actor Jeffrey Tambor arrives at The Weinstein Company and Netflix 2015 Golden Globes After Party, in Beverly Hills, on January 11, 2015

But it now faces growing competition from companies like Amazon, Hulu, Vimeo and others seeking part of the potentially enormous market.

Amazon, in contrast to Netflix when it first started with "House of Cards," launched a whole bunch of shows at once: "Alpha House," "The Cosmopolitans," "Mozart in the jungle"—but "Transparent" is the first real hit.

Not content with this success, the online retailer led by Jeff Bezos trumpeted its ambitions Tuesday by announcing it had hiring big-time director Woody Allen, much as Netflix did with David Fincher on "House of Cards."

The deal with the director of "Manhattan," "Radio Days" and "Hannah and Her Sisters," is for a full season of half-hour shows, for release next year on Amazon Prime Video in the United States, Britain and Germany.

"I don't know how I got into this. I have no ideas and I'm not sure where to begin," the 79-year-old Allen said, adding with his trademark humor: "My guess is that (Amazon Studios chief) Roy Price will regret this."



Netflix scooped the prize for best actor in a drama series, going to Kevin Spacey, pictured with Kate Mara, for House of Cards

The online video portal Hulu.com, another Netflix rival, also produces its own series, including "Deadbeat," "Battleground" and "The Awesomes," although none has yet really hit made it big.

Others including YouTube et Vimeo have followed suit: the former with shows including "I hate being single" and "Blue," while the latter has wowed critics with "High Maintenance," which breaks the convention of

episode length, leaving it up to the director's inspiration to decide how long each one lasts.



Actors Judith Light and Andrew Rannells attend the "Transparent" cast and crew Golden Globes Viewing Party at The London West Hollywood on January 11, 2015

Traditional TV networks, meanwhile, are getting with it and launching their own VOD services.

Nor are big-screen artists immune to the lure of the Internet: Spike Lee this week launched his latest film, "Da Sweet Blood of Jesus," on Vimeo even before its release in theaters.

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