

Fullscreen media to start video-on-demand youth channel

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In this Sept. 17, 2015 file photo, Grace Helbig arrives at the 5th Annual Streamy Awards in Los Angeles. Helbig stars in the feature length film, "Electra Woman & Dyna Girl," premiering on the new Fullscreen digital channel, a subscription video-on-demand service debuting globally on April 26. (Photo by Rich Fury/Invision/AP, File)

The Fullscreen media company is expanding its role beyond cultivating young video stars by launching a subscription video-on-demand service

whose programming will draw on homegrown talent as well as content from a range of outside producers.

The ad-free channel, christened full-screen (in lowercase), will be targeted at the 13- to 30-year-old audience that also serves as its primary talent pool, and will debut globally on April 26, the company announced Wednesday. It describes fullscreen as "the world's first video membership experience programmed for the social-first generation."

Monthly cost will be \$4.99, with a 30-day free trial.

Fullscreen talent heretofore has won wide exposure and loyal support on social media including YouTube channels with such digital stars as Grace Helbig, The Fine Bros. and Devin SuperTramp, whose subscribers number in the millions.

Programming for the full-screen channel will range from short-form series to full-length films, with the original scripted lineup including "Electra Woman & Dyna Girl," a Sid and Marty Krofft reboot starring Helbig and Hannah Hart; "Filthy Preppy Teen\$," from Paul Scheer ("Fresh Off the Boat") and Jonathan Stern ("Childrens Hospital"), a satire of contemporary teenage dramas; "Jack & Dean of All Trades," a workplace comedy starring and created by Jack Howard and Dean Dobbs; and "Making Moves," a dance-oriented drama.

Unscripted series include "My Selfie Life," created and executive produced by John Farrar and Pete Cooksley ("Find My First Love"), and personality-driven programming including "Shane & Friends," "Zall Good with Alexis G. Zall" and "Kingdom Geek."

Vintage fare will include the series "Dawson's Creek," "Saved by the Bell," "Suburgatory" and "Happy Endings" as well as such films as "Can't Hardly Wait," "Man Up" and "Camp Takota."

"Finding the right mix—only time will tell exactly how to do that," Fullscreen founder and CEO George Strompolos told The Associated Press. But he said the core of fullscreen will be "a new generation of stars that our audience built themselves through social media by liking them, following them and subscribing to them on a range of devices."

The Los Angeles-based Fullscreen says it has under contract some 75,000 creators at every level of prominence.

AT&T has signed on as a partner for the new service. It will collaborate with fullscreen to market and promote the service to AT&T's video, mobile and broadband customers and will co-produce content for airing both on the fullscreen SVOD channel and on a fullscreen block on AT&T's The Audience Network.

Founded in 2011, Fullscreen is majority owned by Otter Media, a partnership between AT&T and The Chernin Group.

Strompolos said the fullscreen channel should co-exist comfortably with the talent and content already widely available through social media outlets.

"Our creator business is very much built on helping creators be successful on YouTube and other social media platforms. We don't want to stop that," he said. "When it comes to original content (for the fullscreen channel), we want it to be something new. This is absolutely not a stop-doing-what-you're-doing-on-YouTube-and-come-do-it-over-here strategy."

Strompolos disclosed no target level for subscriptions, but characterized the new venture as a potentially significant revenue source as well as a valuable retail-level brand extension of the company.

"We will have one company that develops talent, develops great content with that talent, produces that content in-house, and then we distribute that content directly to the consumer," he said.

As a new streaming channel, fullscreen becomes the latest entry in a growing number of so-called "over-the-top" subscription services that bypass cable hookups and are available on most any screen device. For example, in January, Seeso, owned by NBCUniversal, signed on with a strictly comedy lineup.

Strompolos called the proliferation of rival OTT channels "more validating to us than threatening" as fullscreen joins the pack. He pointed to its unique appeal.

"We are a lifestyle and demographic-focused service," he said.

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