

Licensing Expo

Streaming Hits The Mainstream

Licensing Expo 2015, held in Las Vegas June 9–11, sported a new look this year, with streaming-media platforms gaining enough critical mass to spur companies to develop licensing programs encompassing publishing and consumer products, even without any traditional media support.

That trend was evident on the show floor, with YouTube, Awesomeness TV, and Amazon Studios all exhibiting for the first time. Netflix had a commanding presence as well, with signage at several licensors' booths highlighting its involvement in financing and distributing their properties. A number of agents also represented licenses that have gained fame through streaming.

"It's awesome that [these streaming platforms] are coming to the show," said Lori Burke, executive director of licensing acquisitions and media at Penguin Random House. "We can strike up early conversations with them, both about great content that has the potential to survive in the publishing world and about opportunities for developing our content."

The major Hollywood studios are also overseeing licensing programs for properties introduced through streaming. "I don't think I had a meeting with any of the big studios where they weren't

touting what they had on one of the streaming platforms," Burke said.

Publishing is a key area of expansion for properties coming out of the streaming world, because it is "part of the extension of their character and their voice," explained Malik Ducard, YouTube's director of content partnerships, who was a speaker at the Expo.

Recent books from YouTube stars include *Girl Online*, by Zoe "Zoella" Suggs (Atria/Keywords Press); *ASAP Science*, by Mitchell Moffit and Greg Brown (Scribner); and *The Haunting of Sunshine Girl*, by Paige McKenzie (Weinstein Books).

Despite the successes, some companies—on both the licensee and licensor sides—are still hesitant about properties from YouTube and other platforms. "I think retailers are getting it, but the licensees still don't understand it," said Jessica Wichard, executive director of retail and marketing at the Joester Loria Group. The agency represents SMOSH, the YouTube comedy team of Anthony Padilla and Ian Hecox, which recently signed a deal with Dynamite Entertainment for graphic novels.

Sesame Workshop's new series *Furchester*, which airs on television internationally but not in the U.S., generates up to half a million views per episode on YouTube, according to Scott Chambers, general manager and senior v-p, North American media and licensing. "I'm not sure about doing a mass consumer products program for a YouTube-only show," he said, but added that if potential

licensees are asking for the rights, Sesame might try a few Furchester products to see what happens.

On top of its growth impact on distribution and its role as a source of properties, streaming is increasingly important for marketing. Not only do stars see significantly increased audiences, but the fans are more engaged than in traditional media.

"These creators drive a tremendous amount of true love from their fans," Ducard said. One example is the box office success of *The Fault in Our Stars* film, based on the book by John Green, also a noted YouTuber. "This movie did so much better than expected," Ducard said. "The studio underestimated the social media fan base of the author on YouTube."

Richard Barry, executive v-p, chief merchandising officer at Toys R Us, who spoke on a keynote panel about the future of retail, cited Minecraft as another example of the influence of streaming media, explaining that the property had little traditional marketing support. "It got popular due to kids watching other kids play on YouTube."

"Streaming has really changed what properties are relevant," added Lisa Harper, CEO of Hot Topic, who spoke on the same panel. She said TV shows in general, and especially vintage ones such as *Twilight Zone*, are seeing new life through streaming. "It's opened up a lot of additional fandoms."

—Karen Raugust

News Briefs

Sale Denied In Family Christian Bankruptcy

A U.S. bankruptcy court has denied the sale of Family Christian Stores to FCS Acquisition (a company founded by FCS owners to buy back the

business). The bankruptcy auction is likely to be reopened.

Amazon, PRH Reach Deal

Amazon has signed new long-term sales agreements with Penguin Random House in both

the U.S. and the U.K. PRH was the last of the Big Five American publishers to reach a deal over sales terms.

Simply Read Books Faces Complaints

A group of Canadian children's au-

thors and illustrators charges that Simply Read Books has breached contracts and failed to pay advances and royalties on time.

Amazon Updates KU, KOLL Royalty Terms

Amazon is updating

its royalty terms for authors enrolled in Kindle Unlimited and Kindle Owners Lending Library and will pay authors based on the number of pages read in each book borrowed.

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