

WTF is Quibi? A bold bet on short-form streaming

Quibi is a star-packed, mobile-only streaming service set to launch Monday, costing at least \$5 a month. Here's everything to know about it.

Quibi, a mobile-only subscription video service set to launch Monday in the US, has been pumping up the hype for months. It has the backing of all the major Hollywood studios. A seemingly endless litany of film, TV, music and sports stars are making shows. And it's raised \$1.75 billion to fund its ultra-expensive short-form videos and pay for splashy marketing like a Super Bowl ad.



Quibi is ramping up in the middle of a wave of new streaming services, as tech and media giants all rush to be the one shaping the future of video. But that means Quibi will be competing for your subscription dollars against heavy-duty upstarts like Disney Plus, Apple TV Plus, Peacock and HBO Max, as well as established players like Netflix. And, of course, Quibi faces a Goliath in YouTube, the short-video OG that already draws in more than 2 billion viewers every month.

But Quibi believes its unconventional strategy -- very expensive, star-packed programming released in 10-minute-or-less episodes that you can watch only on mobile devices like your phone -- will hit a sweet spot.

Quibi would be a risky bet even in normal times. But it's also launching in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic. The new coronavirus, which causes the respiratory disease known as COVID-19, has upended the status quo around the world, locking down whole cities and states, overwhelming health care systems and shutting down entire industries. Hollywood is no exception: Movie theaters are shuttered, film and television productions are on hold and big-budget films are being delayed months.



People can watch Quibi at home, sure, but Quibi's bet on exclusively mobile, short-form video was based on the premise that people would gobble up these "quick bite" episodes throughout their day while on the go. But coronavirus containment measures have locked millions of people inside their homes in the US, stifling how much people are out and about.

Quibi is run by two high-profile executives, one Hollywood mogul and another tech veteran. Quibi's founder is Jeffrey Katzenberg, who ran Disney's movie division in the '80s and '90s and co-founded Dreamworks Animation, responsible for hit franchises like Shrek and Kung-Fu Panda. Quibi's CEO is Meg Whitman, the former chief of eBay and Hewlett-Packard.

Katzenberg has said the coronavirus's effect on people's viewing habits isn't necessarily an advantage or a disadvantage for Quibi, it's just different. Some of the service's daily news and lifestyle programming has had to figure out different ways to create their shows in keeping with social distancing, but almost all of them will still be able to deliver their programming for launch.

And Quibi has recruited a who's who of stars to work on its programming, including Chrissy Teigen, LeBron James, Dwayne Johnson, Reese Witherspoon, Chance the Rapper, Kevin Hart, Jennifer Lopez, Idris Elba, Zac Efron, Tina Fey, Liam Hemsworth and husband-and-wife combo Joe Jonas and Sophie Turner (but on different shows), along with a bazillion others. They've also lured in big-name filmmakers like Steven Spielberg, Guillermo del Toro, Antoine Fuqua, Catherine Hardwicke and Ridley Scott to make series.

So is Quibi worth your time and money? Read below for all the answers we know so far, but basically: With a 90-day free trial if you sign up early, you can try it for months to see for yourself, without spending a thing.

OK, WTF is a quibi?

Capital-q Quibi refers to the service, and all-lower-case quibi is the word the company invented for its short-form episodes, which all run about 10 minutes or less.

It's a mashup of the words "quick bites," since the videos are supposed to be bite-size morsels of video.

But don't pronounce the end of quibi like the beginning of "bites." If you rhyme the word "alibi" with "quibi," you're pronouncing this made-up word totally wrong. You're supposed to pronounce the end of quibi with a long e, like the end of "wasabi." Obviously.

When is the release date?

Quibi is launching in the US on Monday, April 6.

The company hasn't specified international plans. Its leaders have said since the beginning that Quibi was designed to be a global service with global rights to stream its shows, but they haven't provided any timelines for when international expansion will happen.



How much does Quibi cost?

Quibi's cheapest tier is \$5 a month and includes advertising. Its ad-free tier is \$8 a month.

By comparison, Netflix -- the world's dominant subscription video service, which never has any ads -- offers its cheapest subscription at \$9 a month in the US, one dollar more. Disney Plus costs \$7 a month in the US without any advertising, a buck cheaper. And YouTube, of course, is free with ads.

But Quibi is offering 90-day free trials for people who sign up before April 20 -- that can save you as much as \$24. Before launch, you can sign up to get details of the free trial by submitting your email address at Quibi's web site -- you'll also receive email updates from Quibi if you do. After the service launches April 6, you can unlock the free trial by downloading the app and signing up for the service before the April 20 deadline.

What devices can stream Quibi?

You can watch Quibi only on mobile devices like phones or tablets. No TVs. Basically, Quibi is designed only for devices with screens that can easily rotate.

Quibi has apps for both Apple and Google's Android system. An app for iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch is already available for preorder in Apple's App Store, and you can preregister for the Android app in the Google Play Store.

What product features does the service include?

Quibi has developed a mobile viewing technology called Turnstyle, which lets a program dynamically react when viewers flip between portrait or landscape mode. That means that no matter how you're holding your mobile device, the video will take up the full screen, rather than minimizing to a small section. For most shows on Quibi, that means the program was shot and edited to crop well when you flip to portrait, the most natural way to hold a phone screen.

But some programs are using Turnstyle in clever ways: A thriller series called Nest shows the filmed action of the story when you look at it in landscape -- but when you rotate into portrait, you can see what's happening on the character's device while the story is playing out. So as a character watches the camera feed of her smart doorbell through her phone, you can choose to either watch the actress reacting to the footage as she sits on the couch, or you can watch what she's seeing on her phone in real time.

Quibi hasn't specified many other technical features yet, such as whether it will have profiles, if it will allow you to download programming to watch offline, or which kinds of high-quality image or sound formats it will support.

What can I watch?

Quibi has said it will have 175 original shows in its first year, totaling about 8,500 episodes. Quibi has three categories of programming: Movies in Chapters, Unscripted and Docs, and Daily Essentials. Across these three categories, Quibi has said it will be releasing more than three hours of new programming every day.

Movies in Chapters are the service's scripted shows, typically big-budget projects with big-name talent to match. These are programs like *Survive*, a drama about a suicidal woman who finds a new will to live after surviving a plane crash, starring *Game of Thrones*' Sophie Turner. Another one is *Most Dangerous Game*, a thriller reimagining the classic short story starring *The Hunger Games*' Liam Hemsworth.



Quibi is making 35 of these Movies in Chapters this year, and the company has said it will release one new episode of Movies in Chapter daily on the service. But it hasn't specified how it will release new episodes of each title -- so we don't know, for example, if episodes in *Most Dangerous Game* will drop daily or come out the same day every week. We also don't know if all Movies in Chapters will follow a uniform release schedule or if some titles will release their shows on different timetables from others.

Unscripted and Docs are Quibi programming that are, well, unscripted shows and documentary series. It covers a range of reality-style shows; game shows and competitions; talk shows; food, travel and culture docs; and a variety of other genres.

Quibi has said it will release five episodes in the Unscripted and Docs category every day.

Finally, the company will be dropping 25 so-called Daily Essentials every day on the service. They focus on news and information, as well as lifestyle programming like a daily horoscope, a recap of the previous night's late night shows and meditation videos. These are also shorter than Quibi's other kinds of programming; Daily Essentials are five to six minutes. The company has partnered with the likes of NBC News, the BBC, TMZ, Telemundo, Polygon and the Weather Channel to make Daily Essentials.

The following shows, with descriptions written by Quibi, will be available to stream at launch:

1. *Flipped* (Movies in Chapters) - Jann and Cricket think they have what it takes to become TV's newest house-flipping couple. Unfortunately, a Mexican drug cartel thinks so too. Now the delusional duo has to survive its newest project -- renovating the cartel's mansions. Starring Will Forte, Kaitlin Olson, Arturo Castro, Eva Longoria and Andy Garcia.
2. *Most Dangerous Game* (Movies in Chapters) - Desperate to take care of his pregnant wife before a terminal illness can take his life, Dodge Tynes (Liam Hemsworth) accepts an offer to participate in a deadly game in which he's the prey. This dystopian action-thriller explores the limits of how far someone would go to fight for their life and their family.
3. *Survive* (Movies in Chapters) - Jane (Sophie Turner) wants to end it all. Then a plane crash almost ends it for her. Now she's crawling from the wreckage with the only other survivor (Corey Hawkins) and a new drive to stay alive. Together they embark on a harrowing journey out of the wilderness, battling brutal conditions and personal traumas in this thrilling drama based on the critically acclaimed novel by Alex

Morel.

4. **When the Streetlights Go On (Movies in Chapters)** - After the murder of a beautiful young girl rocks a suburban community, the victim's sister and her high school peers must struggle to find a sense of normalcy while coming of age in the midst of the murder investigation. Starring: Chosen Jacobs, Sophie Thatcher, Sam Strike, David Lewis, Mark Duplass, Cameron Bancroft, Tony Hale, Beh Ahlers, Kristine Froseth, Queen Latifah
5. **&Music (Docs)** - &Music explores music beyond the songs and even the musicians. This docuseries dives deep into the unsung artists and individuals who work alongside the world's biggest musicians to elevate music into an all encompassing phenomenon. From light directors to choreographers, audio engineers to songwriters and beyond, the series follows subjects who not only enhance music, but experience it from entirely different perspectives. Featuring artists including Ariana Grande, J Balvin and Ozzy Osbourne.
6. **Chrissy's Court (Unscripted)** - Real people. Real cases. And real, legally binding decisions. If you thought Chrissy Teigen couldn't become an actual courtroom judge, you've been overruled. In each episode of Chrissy's Court, Chrissy Teigen reigns supreme as the "judge" over one small claims case. Chrissy's mom turned "bailiff," Pepper Thai, maintains order in the courtroom.
7. **Dishmantled (Unscripted)** - From the creator and executive producer of Chopped comes Dishmantled, a high-octane cooking competition hosted by Tituss Burgess. Each episode starts with the cannon-blasting of a mystery food dish into the faces of two blindfolded chefs. They'll use their culinary prowess to identify the exploded dish and then race against the clock to re-create it. Whichever chef comes closest to the original dish wins a cash prize. Guest judges include Dan Levy, Wolfgang Puck, Jane Krakowski, Antoni Porowski, Rachel Dratch, Roy Choi, Michael Che and Erika Jayne.
8. **Fierce Queens (Docs)** - Presented by Reese Witherspoon, this nature series explores the fabulous females of the animal kingdom. From ant queens to speedy cheetahs, they call the shots in their world and sit at the top of the social hierarchy earning them the title "fierce queens". From the multi-award-winning BBC Studios Natural History Unit, this documentary series will bring you the most dramatic natural history stories from a fresh female perspective.
9. **Gayme Show! (Unscripted)** - Hosted by comedians Matt Rogers and Dave Mizzoni, this comedic competition show uplifts and celebrates the LGBTQ+ community and its allies. In each episode, two straight contestants are paired with a celebrity "life partner" as they battle head to head in physical, mental and even emotional challenges for the title of "Queen of the Straights." Some of the celebrity "life partners" include Ilana Glazer, D'Arcy Carden, Trixie Mattel, Jon Lovett, Nicole Byer, Rachel Bloom, Guy Branum and others.
10. **Gone Mental with Lior (Unscripted)** - Lior Suchard is the world's best mentalist. He teams with a featured celebrity and runs him or her through a string of mindblowing mental stunts. Featuring Kate Hudson, Ben Stiller, Zooey Deschanel, The Miz (Mike Mizanin), Big E (Ettore Ewen), Sasha Banks, Bayley, Rob Gronkowski, James Corden, Ludacris and David Dobrik.
11. **I Promise (Docs)** - Executive produced by LeBron James, I Promise is an original documentary series featuring an in-depth look at the first academic year inside the groundbreaking I Promise School that opened its doors in 2018. I Promise tells the story of LeBron James' efforts to close the achievement gap in his hometown of Akron, Ohio, through the eyes of the inspiring students who are resetting expectations of their futures. The series will explore the day-to-day trials, triumphs, and life-changing impact of the school staff, students and families working together in a unique, family-first educational environment that embraces the trauma and challenges many face in Akron.
12. **Memory Hole (Unscripted)** - Memory Hole is a smart, biting and hilarious ride exploring the archives of the most cringe-worthy events in pop culture. The first season aims its laser-focused comedy on Canada. Hosted by one of Canada's esteemed exports, Will Arnett, it takes viewers on a comedic journey skewering myriad topics most of us forgot or never even knew existed. Those who can't learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Memory Hole is here to help. Guest stars include Jason Bateman, Patton Oswald

and John Bradley.

13. **Murder House Flip (Unscripted)** - From the executive producer of CSI, Murder House Flip is an unconventional new home renovation show that takes on the country's most infamous homes: the ones known for mysterious murders committed within their walls. Homeowners turn to high-end renovation experts, Mikel Welch and Joelle Uzyel, to remove the stains of the past and take these homes from morbid to marvelous.
14. **NighGowns (Docs)** - Full of heart, humor and a hell of a lot of glitter, NightGowns follows Sasha Velour over the course of eight episodes as she adapts her critically acclaimed Brooklyn drag revue into a full-on stage production -- and the biggest drag showcase of her life. Part performance documentary, part portrait of the artist, we'll watch Velour work with each member of her uniquely inclusive ensemble to craft the lip-sync performances of their wildest dreams. Eight iconic, sharable, must-watch performances that redefine what drag can be.
15. **Nikki Fre\$h (Unscripted)** - Starring and executive produced by Nicole Richie, Nikki Fre\$h unites her passions for Mother Earth and hip hop into her eponymous alter ego, Nikki Fre\$h. Nikki brings a new voice to wellness with a totally fresh style of music -- dropping socially conscious and educational rhymes on the world. Nikki Fre\$h will interact with real life seekers and consciousness experts to learn ways to better serve our bodies and our planet, while comedically exaggerating those solutions to the edge of sanity.
16. **Prodigy (Docs)** - Hosted by Megan Rapinoe, each episode highlights one Prodigy's unprecedented athletic accomplishments, while also diving deep into their origin stories to introduce the Prodigies to the world in a powerful, unique way. Each episode will inspire not only sports fans, but fans of the human experience, all while honoring the villages that helped them earn the numerous National, World and Olympic Championships they have obtained early in their young careers.
17. **Punk'd (Unscripted)** - Hosted and executive produced by Chance the Rapper, Punk'd dares to go where no show has gone before. Now that technology can really augment reality, we're back to pull the boldest pranks on the biggest stars in Hollywood. No one is safe.
18. **Run This City (Docs)** - Run This City is a series that follows Jasiel Correia II as he navigates his role as the youngest mayor of Fall River, Massachusetts, ever elected to office. When the FBI indicts him for his former company, Correia vows to fight the charges and be vindicated.
19. **Shape of Pasta (Docs)** - Chef Evan Funke. Italy. And the pursuit of pasta perfection. He's uncovering the craft and culture behind some rare and forgotten pasta shapes. We dare you not to drool. Follow Chef Evan Funke's passion-filled quest to find the last remaining masters of the world's most beloved food... pasta. Join his whirlwind tour of Italy to keep these traditions alive.
20. **Singled Out (Unscripted)** - Hosted by Keke Palmer and Joel Kim Booster, Singled Out will hook up a new generation of singles, of all genders and sexual preferences, seeking love in 20 bite-size episodes. Reflective of today's dating landscape, where everyone is connected, the series will bring online dating to life with a twist -- the main dater is linked to the pool of diverse singles through social media.
21. **Skrrt with Offset (Unscripted)** - Offset is a big fan of cars. His garage has over 30 sports and luxury cars. This series follows him as he joins his celebrity and rapper friends -- like Quavo, Lil Yachty and T-Pain -- exploring all things cars. Guests on Skrrt with Offset will include: Cardi B, Chance the Rapper, Dapper Dan, Jay Leno, Quavo and Takeoff from Migos, Lil Yachty, T-Pain and more.
22. **Thanks A Million (Unscripted)** - Executive produced by Jennifer Lopez, this emotional and inspiring series features grateful public figures who kickstart a chain of kindness by gifting \$100,000 to an unsuspecting individual who must pay it forward. Across 10 episodes, \$1,000,000 will be put in the hands of everyday people. Jennifer Lopez, Kristen Bell, Nick Jonas, Tracy Morgan, Aaron Rodgers, Yara Shahidi, Gabriel Iglesias, Anthony Davis, Kevin Hart and Karlie Kloss will each lead individual episodes of Thanks a Million.

23. **The Sauce (Unscripted)** - Executive produced and judged by Usher, *The Sauce* follows dance sensations and hosts Ayo & Teo as they explore the unique dance cultures in cities across the US, finding the freshest online talent to compete head-to-head for a cash prize. Usher will serve as judge for this fresh dance competition series.
24. **You Ain't Got These (Docs)** - Executive produced by Lena Waithe, this is not a show about sneakers. It's a show about sneaker culture. Fitting in. And belonging to something bigger than yourself. Episodes feature Carmelo Anthony, Billie Jean King, Hasan Minhaj, Candance Parker, Questlove, Nas, Jazerai Allen-Lord, Kerby Jean-Raymond, Mike Epps, Jemele Hill, Lena Waithe, Josh Lubner and Eric Koston.

The following shows will debut April 13:

1. **Agua Donkeys (Movies in Chapters)** - It's always summer for the Agua Donkeys as they chase the perfect tan, the perfect vibe and the perfect mix of bromine and chlorine to service some of the "sickest" backyard pools in their Utah hometown.
2. **The Stranger (Movies in Chapters)** - An unassuming young rideshare driver is thrown into her worst nightmare when a mysterious Hollywood Hills passenger enters her car. Her terrifying, heart-stopping ride with the stranger unfolds over 12 hours as she navigates the seedy underbelly of Los Angeles in a chilling game of cat and mouse.
3. **#FreeRayshawn (Movies in Chapters)** - #FreeRayshawn tells the story of a young, black Iraq War veteran named Rayshawn who is set up by New Orleans police on a drug deal, runs for his life, and takes refuge inside his apartment building with his girlfriend and child. With New Orleans PD and the SWAT team outside ready to storm his home, a social media frenzy begins as community members and news outlets arrive at the scene. During this growing mayhem, a sympathetic cop named Steven Poincy plays the role of negotiator, and, over the course of one brutally stressful day, he tries to get Rayshawn to calmly surrender in order to avoid an escalation of unnecessary violence.
4. **50 States of Fright (Movies in Chapters)** - *50 States of Fright* will explore stories based on urban legends from Michigan, Kansas, Oregon, Minnesota, and Florida taking viewers deeper into the horrors that lurk just beneath the surface of our country.
5. **Elba v Block (Unscripted)** - One of Hollywood's biggest stars, Idris Elba, and one of the planet's hottest drivers, Ken Block, are going head to head in a hilarious, action-packed rivalry as they pit cars against each other through increasingly outrageous stunts to prove whose car, and which driver, is the best.
6. **Let's Roll with Tony Greenhand (Unscripted)** - As a world renowned cannabis artist, Tony Greenhand and his smokable creations have attracted an A-list clientele, propelling him as one of the most notable figures in the growing marijuana industry. In each episode, Tony connects with a different celebrity weed enthusiast to make their wildest joint dreams come true.
7. **Fight Like a Girl (Unscripted)** - In each episode of *Fight Like a Girl*, Stephanie McMahon pairs a WWE Superstar with a young woman struggling with a personal issue that has been holding her back. The WWE Superstars draw from their own life experiences to help their trainees overcome obstacles and become tougher, stronger and healthier versions of their former selves inside and out.

The following shows will debut April 20:

1. **Dummy (Movies in Chapters)** - An aspiring writer (Anna Kendrick) befriends her boyfriend's sex doll and the two take on the world together.
2. **Iron Sharpens Iron (Unscripted)** - Executive produced by Cam Newton, *Iron Sharpens Iron* shows fans their favorite star athletes paired up with another professional athlete from a completely different sport. For the first time ever, these athletes share the secrets of their individual training programs and take a deep dive into high-level sports science and fitness.

The following shows will debut April 27:

1. Cup of Joe (Unscripted) - Cup of Joe is an eight-part travel series starring Joe Jonas. As one-third of the global music phenomenon Jonas Brothers and lead singer of DNCE, Joe has traveled the world -- city after city. But between whirlwind pit stops and racing between concert venues, Joe has only scratched the surface of what these places actually have to offer. Before he hits the stage on his sold-out Happiness Begins tour, Joe will experience each city like a true native - as he pairs up with celebrity friends at each destination. This global superstar is finally seeing the world. Guests and locations include Sophie Turner (Amsterdam), Tina Fey (New York), Matthew McConaughey (Austin), Nick Jonas (Barcelona), Kevin Jonas (Barcelona), Lewis Capaldi (Berlin), David Hasselhoff (Berlin), Nicole Scherzinger (London), Lewis Hamilton (Paris), and Jack Black (Los Angeles).
2. Floored (Unscripted) - Hosted by Liza Koshy, In each episode of Floored, two teams of skilled dancers take on an insane dance floor with a life of its own. Dancers try their best to perform a rehearsed routine, but can they hold it together when the floor itself actually lifts, tilts, drops, shakes and spins in time to the music? Additionally, the dancers will also be caught off-guard as perils are thrown their way when they least expect it. Who can survive the dance and who will be Floored? Guest stars include: Storm Reid, Maddie Ziegler, Mackenzie Ziegler, DC Youngfly, Anthony Ramos, Rumer Willis, Adam Rippon, Josh Peck, Benito Skinner, Danielle Brooks, Peyton List, Chad Kroeger, Anna Camp, Nolan Gould, Francia Raisa, Ceraadi, JT Parr, Matt Steffanina, Wildabeast Adams, Janelle Ginestra Adams, Amber Riley and Amanda Seales.

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