

WHEN FOLLOWERS ARE THE LEADERS

Pre-Launch Follower Data Points to Strong Premiere for Netflix's *Wednesday*

CVM Insights Data Report
November 2022

- Netflix's soon-to-premiere *Wednesday* is on track to have one of their strongest series launches of the last few years and could be their big hit of the fourth quarter
- Pre-launch data shows it is appealing to younger audiences, which bodes well for Netflix's new advertiser-supported offering as advertisers place a high value on that demographic
- Viewers who intend to watch *Wednesday* also show a strong preference for programs on platforms other than Netflix, which may draw non-subscribers to the platform
- Early daily viewing data will be key to assess how quickly those anticipating *Wednesday* convert into viewers



INTRODUCTION

Every industry wants a crystal ball to show them the outcomes of decisions made today. This is especially true in television when executives commit millions of dollars to produce shows in the hope that they not only become hits, but produce halo effects for their platforms. Those effects can take several forms: Increased stock prices, an influx of subscribers, sampling of other shows on the platform, etc.

Because the stakes are so high, the more a platform knows about a title's audience pre-launch, the better it can strategize to give that title the best chance to succeed. The most reliable source for this information comes in the form of stated intent to view from consumers themselves, not just awareness or chatter on social media.

One platform with a lot on the line is Netflix, whose revenue sources are less diversified than its primary competitors and thus reliant on the success of individual shows. They had big successes in the third quarter with *The Sandman* and *Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, but they will need a new hit for the fourth quarter. Could it be *Wednesday*, based on *The Addams Family* character, premiering on November 23?

To answer this question, we leveraged Whip Media's global, consumer-facing TV Time app, which allows consumers to "follow" titles that interest them, indicating both awareness and intent to view. TV Time users then report when they've viewed a title, allowing us to see how successfully followers convert into viewers.

We see this intent to view data as a reliable indicator of eventual viewership. We analyzed this data for every original series produced by the major SVOD platforms between January 2019 and January 2022, and for each platform we saw strong correlations between pre-release follower counts and subsequent viewing. For example, per the TV Time app, Netflix launched 720 original series in the 3-year timeframe, more than any other SVOD. Shows in their top 5% of follower counts 14 days ahead of premiere had a 77% probability of being in the top 10% of shows viewed by the end of its first week post-premiere.

In addition to projecting the relative size of a show's audience, the follower data also enables us to uncover characteristics of the eventual audience. Specifically, it reveals the age and gender profile for a title as well as programs those followers are currently watching, regardless of platform/network. The information is invaluable for marketing and scheduling titles pre-launch.

So, let's see what the data has to say about *Wednesday*.

WEDNESDAY

Part of the difficulties faced by Netflix in the first half of the year was that they didn't launch a new, culture-influencing hit. They had big successes with returning series like *Bridgerton*, *Ozark* and *Stranger Things*, but a new hit series did not emerge. In the third quarter they launched *The Sandman*, which debuted at #1 on Whip Media's Streaming Originals ranker in its first full week after premiere. Nielsen reported, several weeks later, that it knocked *Stranger Things* out of first place in their top 10 original streaming chart.¹ Later in the quarter, Netflix launched *Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* which became, according to Netflix, its second biggest English language series² after *Stranger Things*. That coincided with the service's first quarterly increase in North American subscribers this year. It seems that in the newly mature SVOD marketplace, Netflix needs at least one new hit per quarter to maintain or grow subscribers. They have found some success with *The Watcher*, but could there be a bigger hit on the horizon in Q4?



On November 23, Netflix will launch *Wednesday*, a series based on *The Addams Family* characters, specifically the daughter. It is directed by Tim Burton and stars Catherine Zeta-Jones and Jenna Ortega.

Twenty-eight days pre-launch, *Wednesday* had over 50k followers in the TV Time app – among the top 2% of Netflix original series since January 2019. At 14 days pre-launch, it had over 60k followers, just ahead of what *The Sandman* had at that point. We therefore expect *Wednesday* will have one of the stronger Netflix Originals premieres in recent years, likely on par with that of *The Sandman*. The table below shows follower counts for the top ten most followed Netflix series at 14 days prior to launch since January of 2019.

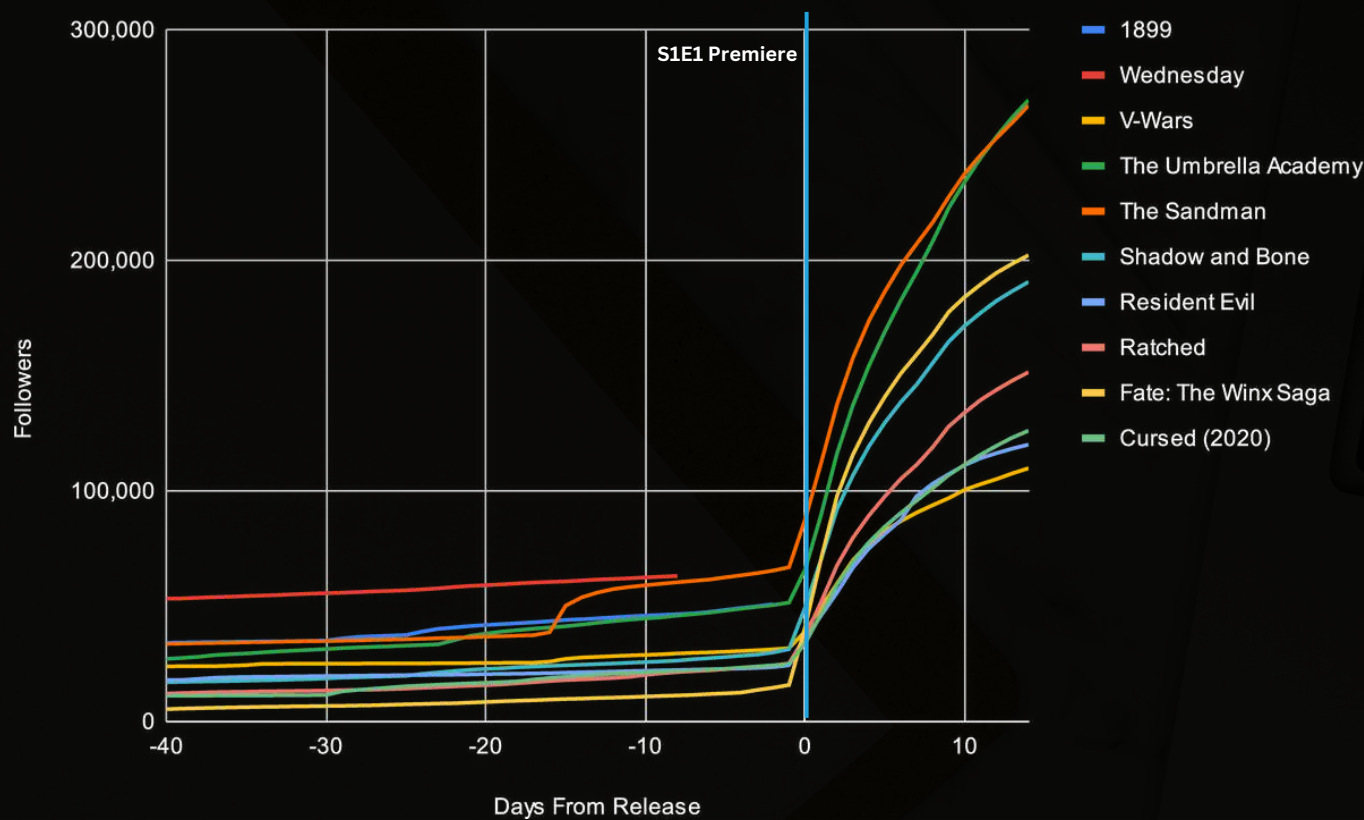
ANTICIPATION FOR THE TOP FOLLOWED NETFLIX SERIES SINCE JAN 2019
 BASED ON FOLLOWERS 14 DAYS AHEAD OF PREMIERE

Show	Premiere Date	Followers (T-14 Days)
The Witcher	12/20/19	175,679
Wednesday	11/23/22	63,102
The Sandman	8/5/22	60,363
1899	11/17/22	46,508
The Umbrella Academy	2/15/19	45,934
V-Wars	12/5/19	29,494
Shadow and Bone	4/23/21	26,384
Resident Evil	7/14/22	22,305
Cursed	7/17/20	21,916
Ratched	9/18/20	21,391
Fate: The Winx Saga	1/22/21	11,268

Source: Whip Media CVMi. Global followers, balanced by age/gender.
 Originals released January 1, 2019- November 15, 2022.

The follower data shows that *The Witcher* was in a class of its own with nearly three times the amount of followers, so it is excluded in the chart below. It is then easy to see how *Wednesday* is tracking versus other recent Netflix launches. The red line is *Wednesday*, which is outperforming every other title on the chart. And as we see, in most cases the higher the pre-launch followers, the more likely that show is to be positioned higher than other shows post-launch.

ANTICIPATION FOR THE TOP 10 FOLLOWED NETFLIX SERIES SINCE JAN 2019
BASED ON FOLLOWERS 14 DAYS AHEAD OF PREMIERE



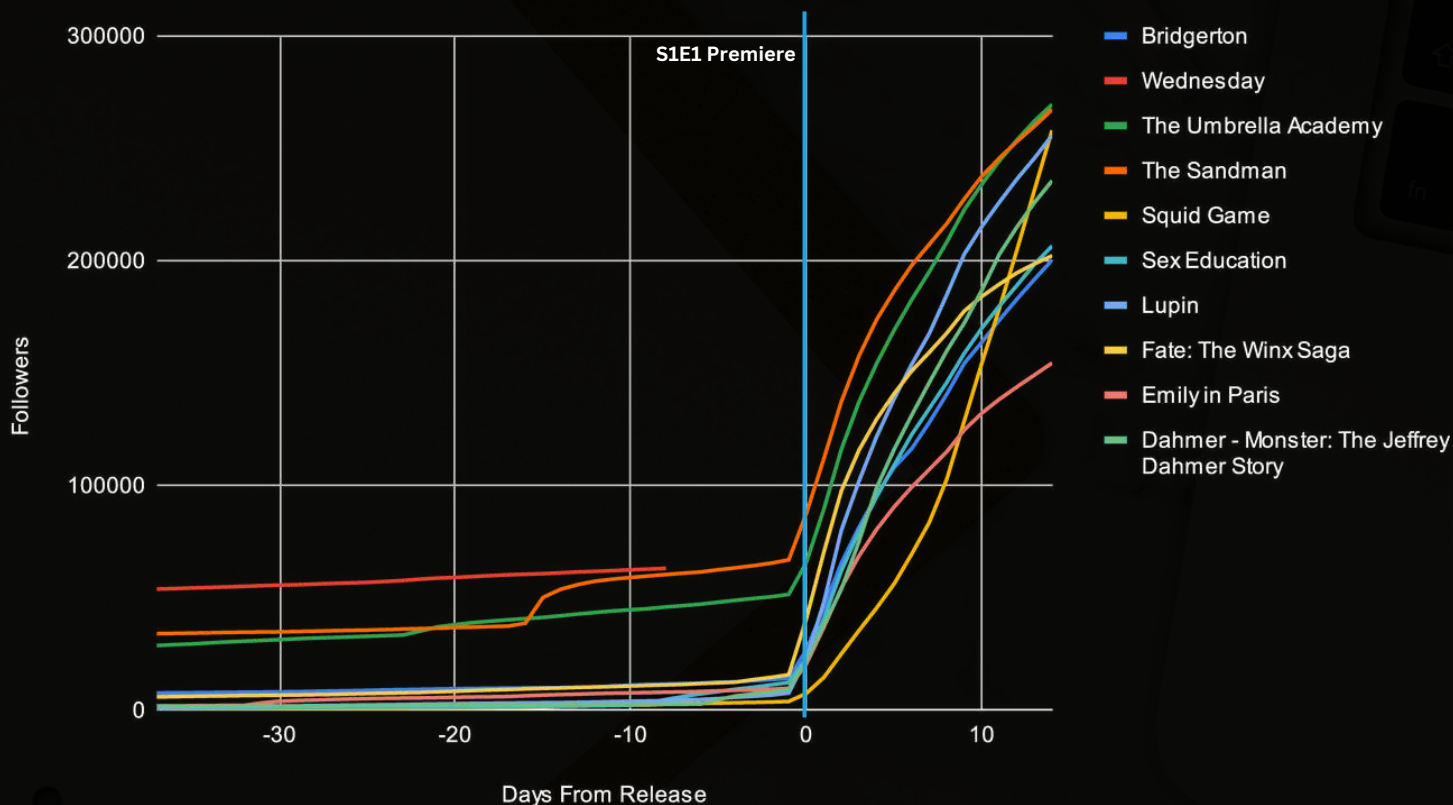
Source: Whip Media CVMi. Global followers, balanced by age/gender.
Originals released January 1, 2019- November 15, 2022.
Excludes *The Witcher*. First seasons.

While the pre-launch follower counts are good indicators of post-launch performance, they aren't perfect. We've seen titles that have decent pre-launch anticipation, but not top tier, that go on to big success. This is particularly the case with Netflix, as their algorithm is highly effective at getting the right content in front of the members most likely to enjoy it.

In the chart below, we have follower counts for the most highly *viewed* Netflix Originals by TV Time users since January of 2019 over their first two weeks of availability, shown alongside *Wednesday's* data. The growth of *Squid Game* in its first week (more on that later) is clearly observed in this chart, despite having lower pre-release follower counts than other shows. Still, the follower counts are generally indicative of a strong opening performance as the lines are stacked in a similar order through the first three days of exhibition.

Based on this data, it appears that *Wednesday* (the red line) has a higher follower count than any of these shows at two weeks before premiere, just above *The Sandman* (orange). Based on this chart, it appears likely that *Wednesday* will have at least a similar amount of viewers for its premiere as *The Sandman*.

ANTICIPATION FOR THE TOP 9 (+*Wednesday*) VIEWED NETFLIX SERIES SINCE JAN 2019 BASED ON VIEWERS 14 DAYS AFTER PREMIERE

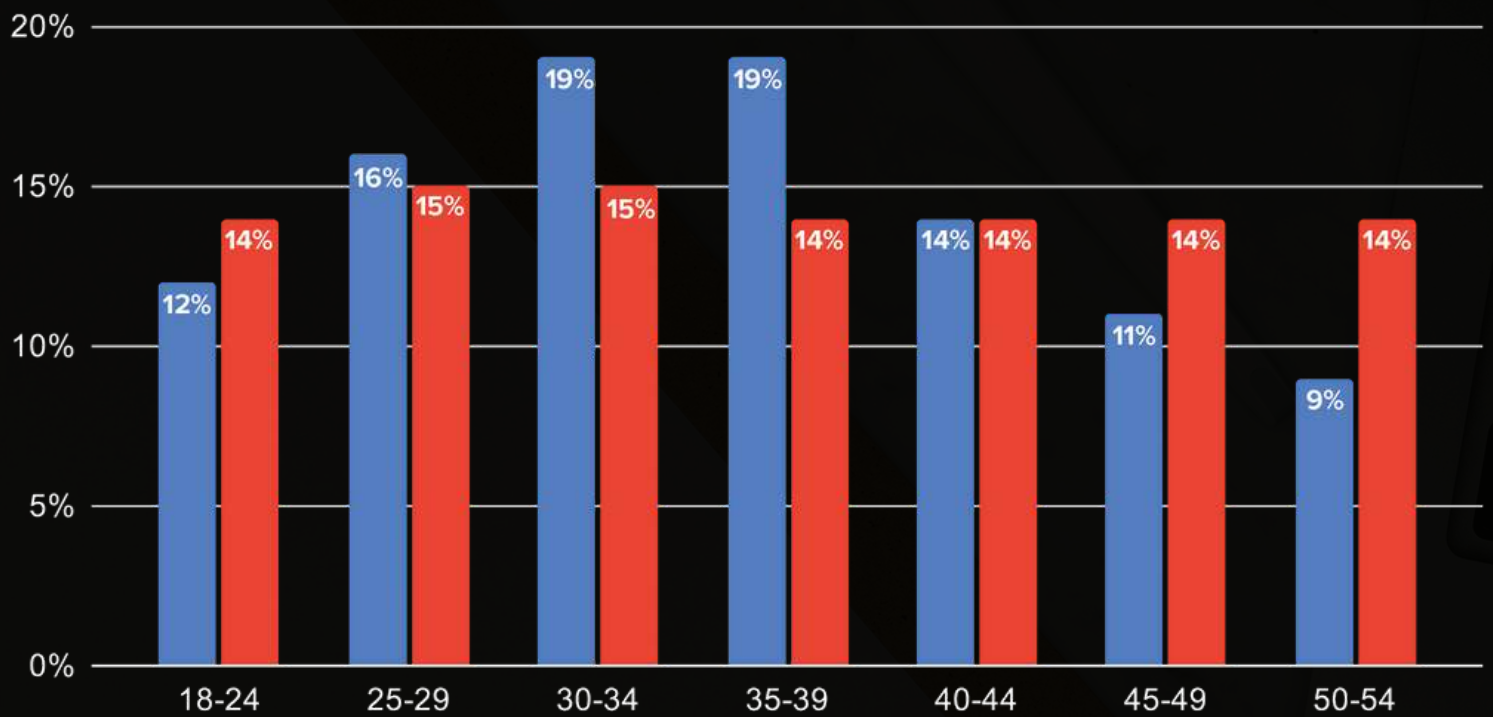


Source: Whip Media CVMi. Global followers, balanced by age/gender.
Originals released January 1, 2019- November 15, 2022.
Excludes *The Witcher*. First seasons.

Beyond pointing to a sizable audience, the composition of *Wednesday's* followers indicate that it will have a younger skew than that of the average Netflix title (includes movies). This will take on added importance as Netflix's new ad-supported tier takes root as many advertisers prize younger viewers.

Age Distribution Of Followers

Wednesday Netflix Originals



Source: Whip Media CVMi. Balanced sample. July 14, 2022 - October 11, 2022.
Wednesday is lifetime to October 11, 2022.



Pre-launch followers also indicate that *Wednesday*'s potential audience has very strong overlap with titles that are not on Netflix. Among the top 10 affinity titles viewed by followers of *Wednesday*, eight are not Netflix Originals. This implies that *Wednesday* may help Netflix attract viewers from other platforms, and perhaps bring new subscribers to Netflix.

PROGRAMS THAT HAVE THE HIGHEST AFFINITY TO WEDNESDAY
BASED ON FOLLOWERS TO VIEWER OVERLAP RELATIVE TO ALL USERS

Show	Network
I Am Groot	Disney+
Pretty Little Liars: Original Sin	HBO Max
Helstrom	Hulu
The Midnight Club	Netflix
Guillermo del Toro's Cabinet of Curiosities	Netflix
American Horror Stories	Hulu
The Boys Presents: Diabolical	Amazon Prime Video
Penny Dreadful: City of Angels	Showtime
Chucky	USA Network
I Know What You Did Last Summer	Amazon Prime Video

While clearly this intent to view data indicates a strong opening for *Wednesday*, it doesn't guarantee continued success. *Wednesday* is well positioned to succeed, but ultimately, a show needs viewers to embrace it. As we will demonstrate in the next section, monitoring the early viewership is also important.

SQUID GAME

The biggest sensation in television in the fall of 2021 was the appearance of *Squid Game*. As is often the case with Netflix, there was not a lot of pre-launch promotion for this show and little press coverage. Yet, the show quickly attracted huge audiences around the world; seemingly out of nowhere.

The reality was that the show had some buzz, if one knew where to look. Global follower counts collected through the TV Time app revealed that *Squid Game* was getting traction as early as a month ahead of its premiere. Twenty-eight days ahead of its launch, the global follower count for *Squid Game* among Netflix series was in the top 15% of those counts. Two weeks later, it had moved into the top 10%, still 14 days ahead of launch.

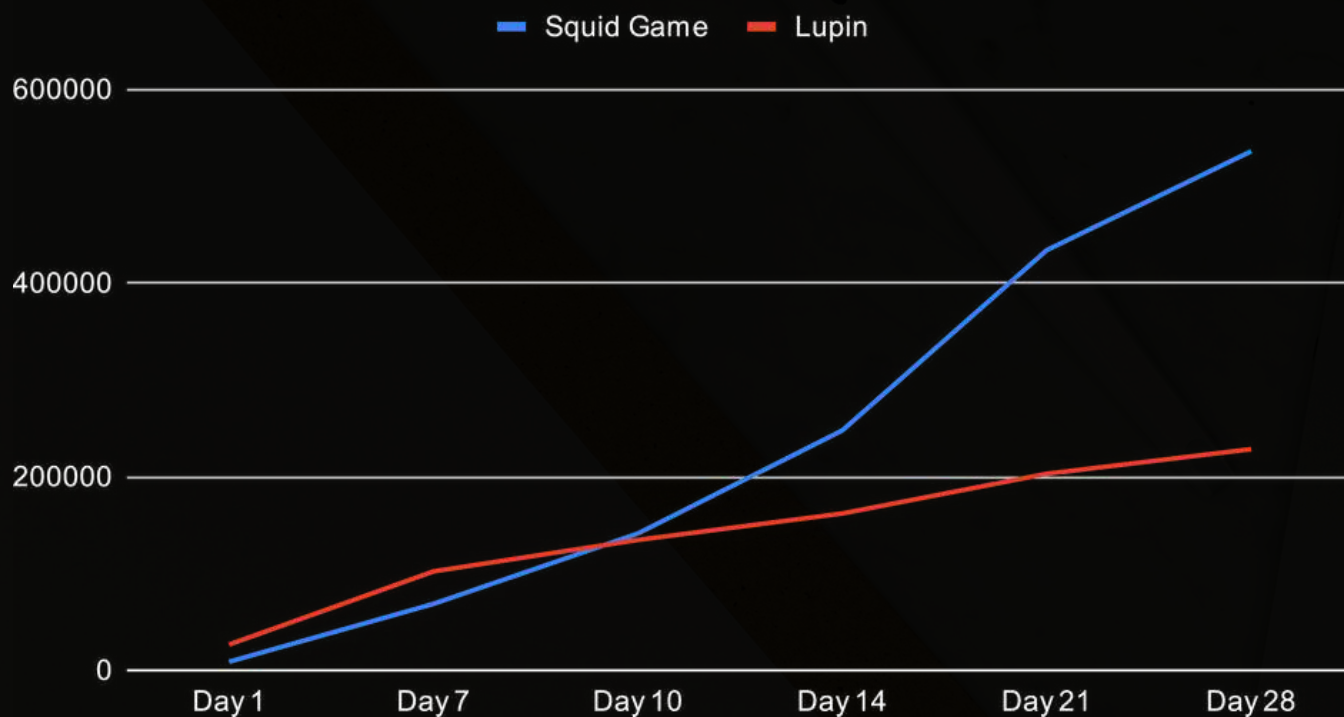
Once *Squid Game* launched, Whip Media's viewership data revealed how quickly the program was adopted by viewers. As indicated by the pre-launch follower counts, *Squid Game's* viewership after its first day was already in the top 5% of all Netflix originals that had launched since January 2019, ranking #32.

By day 7 of its run, *Squid Game* had shot up to #11 on the list and had grown 1,691% in viewers since launch, faster than any other top 5% show in the database. At this point, no measurement service had reported on *Squid Game's* performance and Netflix hadn't made any announcements either. That didn't happen until day 10 when Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos announced that *Squid Game* had just surpassed *Lupin* as their top non-English language series.³ Interestingly, *Squid Game* also surpassed *Lupin* on day 10 in Whip's tracking data.



The chart below illustrates how Whip data saw *Squid Game*'s daily rise and how it compared with *Lupin*'s.

TOTAL VIEWERS BY DAY SQUID GAME VS. LUPIN



Source: Whip Media CVMi. Balanced sample.

In the case of *Squid Game*, intent to view was certainly a positive indicator, but it was the growth in viewers within the first days of premiere that foretold its phenomenal performance.

CONCLUSION

Once a network or platform commits to a new title, it is crucial for them to understand if there is awareness and demand for it. Whip Media's follower data offers a reliable measure of intent to view pre-launch and the ability to benchmark that anticipation versus comparable titles over time as the premiere day approaches.

This creates opportunities for platforms to course correct with extra marketing resources or strategy shifts for titles that may be underperforming. Even for platforms that don't have big marketing budgets, or don't promote at all, anticipation data can indicate if a premiere date should change, should a competitor's title look relatively strong for an identical date. Additionally, information about the demographic composition of the expected audience can be used to assist in pre-launch marketing, planning, and scheduling strategies.

There are many other stakeholders with a need to better predict how a title is likely to perform, including programmers, distributors, financial investors, platform aggregators, and talent agencies.

A crystal ball may be a mythical thing, but anticipation data enables the industry with real data that allows them to glimpse, and shape, the future.

ABOUT WHIP MEDIA

Whip Media is reimagining content licensing to create a smarter, more connected entertainment ecosystem. We help leading entertainment companies succeed in today's high-volume, high-velocity global content environment with a market-leading cloud software platform that combines unique, actionable insights with scalable, connected workflows for licensing, content planning and financial operations.

ABOUT TV TIME

TV Time, a Whip Media company, is the world's largest TV and movie tracking app for consumers. Every day, over a million people use TV Time to keep track of the shows and movies they're watching, discover what to watch next and engage in a global community of more than 24 million registered fans.

¹<https://deadline.com/2022/09/the-sandman-storms-nielsen-streaming-chart-uncharted-rises-netflix-1235112012/>

²<https://variety.com/2022/tv/news/ryan-murphy-the-watcher-monster-dahmer-netflix-top-10-1235407398/>

³<https://www.allkpop.com/article/2021/09/ted-sarandos-the-co-ceo-of-netflix-states-that-squid-game-is-on-track-to-be-its-biggest-show-ever>