

With top-end videos, Quincy Jones opens 'Netflix of jazz'

PARIS, France - Calling it the "Netflix of jazz," legendary producer Quincy Jones is rolling out Qwest TV, a first global platform dedicated to on-demand jazz videos.



Image credit: [Rolling Stone](#).

The site launches Friday evening with some 400 titles available ranging from a previously unreleased documentary of late Swedish piano prodigy Esbjorn Svensson to concert footage from greats in jazz and related genres including blues master BB King, singer Bobby McFerrin and saxophonist Wayne Shorter.

"I always wanted to make sure that people in the US and across the world could have access to high-quality content: both jazz and jazz-inspired," Quincy Jones, the producer behind mega-stars including Michael Jackson, told AFP by email.

Qwest TV, which takes its name from Jones' label, comes as on-demand video rapidly becomes mainstream, with many viewers more eager to stream content than watch television.

Qwest TV will sell monthly subscriptions for 7.49 dollars, euros or pounds sterling, or at 9.99 in the three currencies for top-of-the-line quality.

Based in Paris, Qwest TV is initially available in English and French with a Japanese version planned by the end of the year and German and Spanish coming in early 2018.

The idea for the site had long been in the back of the mind of Reza Ackbaraly, who for years headed programming at Mezzo TV, the French channel and website that focuses on classical, jazz and world music.

Ackbaraly later took over at Jazz à Vienne, the major summer music festival in France, where in 2014 he met Jones who lamented how the United States, jazz's birthplace, had no channel – either traditional television or on-demand video – dedicated to the genre.

"He was telling me how there's not even a culture ministry in the United States and how this music has very, very little exposure even though it's very dynamic with so many concerts and artists," Ackbaraly said.

With the rapid growth of Netflix, Ackbaraly said he noticed that viewers increasingly wanted "active access" to content.

"And there was nothing in our field," he said. "The idea was also born due to that absence.

While Jones offers expertise, Ackbaraly has spearheaded the operation and made use of his extensive connections within the music industry.

"He often came knocking on our door to ask what we had in our catalogue that wasn't being made use of," said Pascal Bod, marketing manager at Universal Jazz and Blue Note France.

"Now we have a new, identifiable player in the market," he said.

The 84-year-old Jones, while deeply rooted in the US music industry, said it was natural to base Qwest TV in jazz-loving France, which he described as "my second home."

"I used to live in Paris in the late 50s and I learned so much about life there. In America, I grew up during apartheid, but when I went to Paris, it taught me that there could be a balance between black and white," Jones said.

"And beyond that, it taught me about acceptance of all cultures and music. They loved jazz and it was one of the most beautiful sights to see."

Jones said that Qwest TV aimed to add another 600 titles over the next three years either by acquiring international rights or producing them.

The Cameroonian jazz fusion bassist Richard Bona, one of the artists on Qwest TV, hailed the platform for its focus on live performances.

"I hope that this will draw lots of people and become a future means of support for musical programming," Bona said.

Among unique offerings, Qwest TV includes rare footage of a 1977 concert in France by Aretha Franklin and a previously unreleased feature on rising jazz singer Gregory Porter.

"The idea is very interesting because today there are an incalculable number of concerts and videos that have been filmed but are little utilized by record labels and distributors," Bod said.

"There are treasures lying in the cupboards and slowly and slowly they will be made available," he said.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge.

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