

VARIETY

Yahoo inks deal to distribute 'Burning Love'

Ben Stiller's Red Hour behind Ken Marino Web series

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A fresh wave of programming from well-known Hollywood auspices has joined the rising tide of digital original programming.

Yahoo has inked a deal to distribute the scripted comedy series "Burning Love," from Paramount's Insurge Pictures and Ben Stiller's Red Hour Digital. In a separate pact, Fox Digital Entertainment has licensed to both Netflix and Crackle the scripted comedy series "The Ropes," from Vin Diesel shingle One Race Films.

Projects represent a sign that talent is taking seriously the opportunity to produce original programming for digital platforms, which have seen an influx of investment in recent months across other online brands including Hulu, AOL and MySpace.

"Burning Love" follows fireman Mark Orlando (Ken Marino) as he searches for the perfect woman, spoofs popular reality dating shows. Malin Akerman, Kristen Bell, Michael Ian Black, Ken Jeong, Adam Scott, Abigail Spencer, Natasha Leggero, Ryan Hansen, June Diane Raphael, Noureen DeWulf, Kerri Kenney and Beth Dover co-star.

Erica Oyama penned the scripts that Marino helmed. Series bows this spring.

Red Hour inked a two-year first look deal with Paramount Digital Entertainment in 2010 to develop original digital entertainment properties that can be launched as live-action and animated webisodes or social-media games across a variety of platforms, including mobile.

“We love Red Hour’s brand of comedy, and we’re excited to expand on Paramount’s relationship by working with them in the digital space,” said Insurge Pictures prexy Amy Powell.

“Burning Love” is exec produced by Red Hour’s Stiller, Stuart Cornfeld and Mike Rosenstein, Abominable Pictures’ Jonathan Stern, Marino and Oyama, with Par’s Insurge Pictures distributing the project.

“Burning Love” will launch as part of the Comedy Channel on Yahoo Screen, the Web portal’s video destination. Yahoo attracts more than 35 million unique visitors a month.

Red Hour previously created “Stiller and Meara” for Yahoo, as well as Stillerstrong.com and “Night of 140 Tweets” for digital platforms.

“Ropes” is set in the world of nightclub security, following a young bouncer who comes under the influence of some grizzled veterans of his new trade. Diesel was among the writers of the six 22-minute episodes and is executive producing with Samantha Vincent. Zoe Saldana and her sister Cisely Saldana are among the directors of the episodes.

The program debuted Thursday on Crackle’s Xbox Live app and bows March 8 on other digital platforms where Crackle is accessible. “Ropes” represents the first scripted longform series to premiere on Crackle, which recently greenlit its own first longform productions from parent company Sony Pictures Television that will bow this year.

Netflix already released its first original scripted effort, “Lilyhammer,” last month, and has more in the pipeline including a revival of the Fox series “Arrested Development.”

Fox Digital, a division of 20th Century Fox, recently began ramping up production for original programming, licensing “Wolfpack of Reseda” for Myspace and other platforms. “The digital space is increasingly where top talent is heading to take on new creative challenges and step into different roles both in front of and behind the camera,” said David Worthen, head of creative for Fox Digital Studio.

Marino and Oyama are repped by APA, Principato-Young, and attorney Rob Szymanski.