

Paramount, CJ ENM part ways

U.S. streamer goes dark on TVing in Korea in June after two years, no reasons given

When U.S. streamer Paramount+ goes dark on Korean streaming platform TVing on 19 June after two years, a piece of CJ ENM's global dream, laid out with much optimism in December 2021, crumbles.

Reasons for the decision to end the alliance have not been disclosed.

TVing, which added Paramount+ to its Korea platform in June 2022, started telling subscribers about the exit last week, but no other announcements have been made.

The exclusive distribution agreement for Paramount+ on TVing was part of a sweeping deal that included channel distribution in the U.S. and funding/distribution for a slate of premium Korean drama series.

Paramount has confirmed the end of its agreement with CJ ENM, including Paramount+'s exit from TVing, and the end of a co-production/distribution initiative, but has given no details.

CJ ENM's channel on Paramount's Pluto TV in the U.S., which was part of the original agreement, is also going dark. The Korean channel launched on Pluto TV on 14 December 2021.

Announcing the alliance at the end of 2021, the companies said they were leveraging "their combined global reach, production capabilities, world-renowned IP and hit-making pedigree to deliver key synergy opportunities across both companies".

Highlighting mutual production and distribution benefits, CJ ENM CEO, Kang Ho-Sung, said the deal was part of CJ ENM's growth "into a global leading entertainment company".

The rest of the story is on page two

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Pyramid Game

The statement at the time said the companies would "leverage their combined global reach, production capabilities, world-renowned IP and hit-making pedigree to deliver key synergy opportunities across both companies".

Paramount+ rolled out in Korea on 16 June 2022 with, among other titles, Steven Spielberg's *Halo*, *Super Pumped: The Battle for Uber*, *Star Trek: Discovery*, *Yellowjackets*, *Mayor of Kingstown*, *1883*, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, *NCIS*, *SpongeBob SquarePants*, along with Paramount Pictures' film franchises such as *Mission Impossible*, *Top Gun* and *Transformers*.

Seven Korean drama series were produced as part of the partnership.

The first was Korean sci-fi series *Yonder*, made public in February 2022 and re-released in October the same year.

Produced by Dodoong Pictures and CJ ENM and directed by Lee Joon-ik (*The King and the Clown*), *Yonder* is the story of a man who receives a message from his dead wife inviting him to the unknown space called Yonder, where the dead are able to live on by uploading their memories.

The series went out as a TVing original in Korea and on Paramount+ platforms in the rest of the world.

The six titles that followed were *Bargain*, *A Bloody Lucky Day*, *Queen Woo*, *Dongjae, the Good or the Bastard*, produced by Studio Dragon and Ace Factory; romantic comedy *Dreaming of Cinde Fxxxing Rella*; and the most recent, *Pyramid Game*.

The TV shows premiered exclusively on Paramount+ in the U.S., Canada, U.K., Australia, Latin America, Brazil, Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland and Austria, and were distributed by Paramount Global Content Distribution outside of Korea, Japan and Taiwan.

Paramount retains the rights for the originals outside of Korea, Taiwan and Japan.

Speculation on the ground in Korea now is that the hoped-for synergies that drove the alliance did not pan out, and that Paramount's U.S. series had little impact on domestic Korean audiences.

Local observers also talk about TVing's massive spend on Korean professional baseball rights, which put the brakes on content investment elsewhere.

Now in the middle of sale discussions, Paramount's priorities have also clearly changed since the original agreement was signed.

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7 June return for SonyLiv's *Gullak*



Gullak season 4

Indian platform SonyLiv returns family comedy *Gullak* for a fourth season on 7 June. The series, starring Jameel Khan as Santosh Mishra, is produced by TVF. *Gullak* is directed by Shreyansh Pandey. This season's new cast member is Helly Shah. *Gullak*'s return comes in the midst of production of SonyLiv's 2024 tentpole, *Freedom at Midnight*, set against India's struggle for independence based on the book by Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins.



Singapore's Mediacorp opens 4th edition of digital content accelerator

Mediacorp has launched the fourth edition of its Bloomr.SG MCN Accelerator initiative. Applications for the new programme are open until 21 June.

Mediacorp's promise is to cultivate and support creators' move into the world of engaging, monetisable video content.

The fourth intake – divided into "basic" and "advanced" – runs from July to October this year, and includes creative workshops, on-site consultations, and mini pitching sessions for creators.

The Bloomr.SG MCN Accelerator launched in 2021 and has to date supported creators from over 300 channels who have produced some 114,000 videos and amassed a total of 26 million followers.

Astro Shaw premieres *The Experts* First feature after record-breaking *Sheriff*



The Experts

Astro Shaw's heist/action movie, *The Experts*, premieres on 23 May, following the record breaking success of Syafiq Yusof's *Sheriff*.

Sheriff's box office has hit RM60.5 million/US\$13 million, making it Malaysia's top film this year. *Sheriff*'s production budget is said to be between RM6 million/US\$1.3 million and RM8 million/US\$1.7 million.

Written by Joel Soh (*Polis Evo*) and directed by Andre Chiew (*Polis Evo 2*), *The Experts* is about five siblings who are dragged back into their criminal

past by a blackmail plot instigated by a notorious gangster.

Aaron Aziz stars along with Syafiq Kyle, Mimi Lana, Remy Ishak and Ray Dapdap in a story that blend action, family bonds and comedy.

Astro Shaw says the film showcases its "unwavering commitment to producing films across diverse genres".

The Experts, produced with Zak Capital and TGV Pictures, screens in 172 cinemas across Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei.

The production house is BlackFlag.

Fox Ent Global adds Aussie docu-soap to global line-up

Fox Entertainment's centralised content sales unit, Fox Entertainment Global (FEG) has acquired worldwide tape and format distribution rights to Ronde Media's upcoming docu-soap, *Billion Dollar Playground*, which airs on Australia's Foxtel Binge this summer.

The 8x60-mins series is FEG's first third-party distribution agreement.

Billion Dollar Playground looks at the world of opulent homestays through the

eyes of staffers at a luxury hospitality and concierge provider.

Ronde founder, Ben Davies, talked about the "upstairs-downstairs world" of *Billion Dollar Playground*.

"What job could be more difficult than keeping rich people happy?," he said.

Ronde is behind shows such as Netflix's upcoming *Desert King*, *Big Miracles for Nine*, and documentary series *Bondi Rescue* (Paramount/Ten).



JKN hangs onto biz rehab process with new plan; interim status extended to 31 May

Thai company JKN Global has retained control of its business rehabilitation process – for now.

In a new proposal to bondholders, the Bangkok-based company put international partnerships and investment at the centre of a plan that, it says, will put the ailing venture back on a firm financial footing.

The poster-partnership for this strategy is with JKN's existing Miss Universe Organisation investor, the Mexico-based Legacy Holding Group USA (LHG).

LHG paid US\$16-million for a 50% stake in the Miss Universe Organisation in a deal announced towards the end of 2023, after the Thai Bankruptcy Court approved an application for business rehabilitation.

JKN's latest proposal, including a "3 C Plan" that involves content licensing, commerce/merchandising and income from the Miss Universe pageants, was put to a bondholders' meeting in Thailand on Friday, 17 May.

The meeting was convened to decide who would be in charge of the company's business rehabilitation plan and process.

For now, JKN Global, which also promised to repay all debt with interest, appears to be hanging onto its position as interim plan administrator.

The next meeting, with JKN at the helm as "interim plan administrator", has been scheduled for 31 May.

Meanwhile, the company's share trading was suspended on 16 May for failure to submit first quarter financials by the 15 May deadline.

The company, which said it would file by 28 June, blamed "the ongoing process of finalising the financial statements of overseas subsidiaries, which have undergone changes in auditors and accountants".

Asia, Europe film bodies strengthen ties Afan/Efad partnership sealed at Cannes Film Market



From left: Lorna Tee, Jeremie Kessler, Dong Hyun Kim, Berenice Honold, Julie-Jeanne Régnault, Alex Sihar, Chris Marcich

Filmmakers in Asia and Europe are pushing increased collaboration, coming out of this year's Cannes Film Festival with a new partnership between the year-old Asian Film Alliance Network (Afan) and the European Film Agency Directors association (Efad).

The partnership between national film agencies involves 37 Efad and seven Afan members involves policy and regulation, film industry development and info exchange on issues and challenges impacting the film industry.

Afan chair, Alex Sihar, said the aim was to develop a better world film ecosystem against a backdrop of constant change and an urgent need for more information exchange and joint effort.

Sihar is the special staff director general film of Indonesia's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research & Technology.

Efad president, Chris Marcich, from the Croatian Audiovisual Centre, talked about common challenges.

Japan's National Film Archive and Agency of Cultural Affairs Japan and

Thailand's National Soft Power Development Subcommittee in Film Industry participated in the Afan/Efad closed-door roundtable discussion as observers.

The Asia-Europe film relationship was at the centre of an additional discussion – "Asia-Europe: Common Stakes for the film industry" – hosted by the French National Centre of Cinema and the Moving Image (CNC).

Afan was formed in 2023, initiated by the Korean Film Council (Kofic) to bring national film agencies together.

Lorna Tee was elected at the Busan International Film Festival 2023 as Afan's secretary general for a three year term.

Afan's founding members are Kofic; BPI (Indonesian Film Board/Ministry of Education, Culture, Research & Technology); FDCP (Film Development Council Philippines); Finas (National Film Development Corporation Malaysia); IMDA/SFC (The Infocomm Media Development Authority/Singapore Film Commission); MNFC (Mongolian National Film Commission); and Taicca (Taiwan Creative Content Agency).

"I wanted to contribute something that would change this up" Production designer Emma Koh on her path to Oscar-nominated *Red, White and Blue*

Production designer Emma Koh has spent the last decade utilising her diverse skills to create spaces for filmmakers to express their stories, consistently finding ways to showcase authentic worlds that feel lived-in from every angle. These partnerships have made her a sought-after creative, able to transition seamlessly from Asian-centric stories like *Spa Night* to light-hearted Korean-American *XO Kitty* and her most recent project, Nazrin Choudhury's Oscar-nominated short film, *Red, White and Blue*, the story of a single parent who crosses state lines to get an abortion.

Koh says "a lot of things" led to her pursuit of a career in film and TV. "I was one of those kids every Friday who would go to movie theaters by herself and use her allowance money to watch movies... I just lost myself in the world of film," she says.

With an undergrad background in fine arts and sculpture at Cornell University, she took a summer photography course at USC "and quickly realised I did not enjoy it... I was like, oh my God, there are so many cables and it was just a lot of physical work. And so I was like, maybe this isn't for me."

Her finals project for the programme was a short silent film. "We had a budget of US\$100... I was able to fabricate and create an underground Iranian bar speakeasy situation with super dim lighting, lots of fabrics, lots of colors and lots of layering," she says. The film won an award in the programme. "After that experience, I was like, this whole process was really enjoyable..."

Post-college she was asked to art PA for indie feature, *General Education*, And that was how – with a short deviation into parent-pleasing pre-med studies – it all started for her.

"At a certain point, I told my parents, I think I'm gonna go on to film and continue my art degree. That was a super huge letdown for them, but I think they're happy now," she says.

The Oscar nomination helped. "My dad is so funny. He was just like, 'I mean,



Emma Koh

I'm really happy for you. But what does this mean? Do you get paid if you win the Oscar? Do you get money?' And I was like, 'No'. Then he made this joke about how he wants to melt down the award if I get one."

Koh's first film as an art director was Andrew Ahn's debut feature, *Spa Night*, which she talks about today as "still probably my favourite film that I've ever worked on, not just story wise, but also work experience. [Andrew] was super humble, super patient, super kind and super communicative".

Justin Chon's *Jamojaya*, shot in Hawaii, followed before Koh shifted to TV series with *XO Kitty*.

"Kitty was a beast. Don't let the name fool you," Koh laughs. The series was her first experience working in Korea with a Korean crew and different rules, processes and habits.

For example, turning the yellow/brown grass of a Korean winter into the green grass of spring without VFX, "which would have cost too much". In the U.S., she says, the process of painting grass is "super easy and FDA regulated". In Korea, not so much, but she nevertheless managed to secure necessary permits.

"My Korean crew was just completely flabbergasted... It was like a whole new world," she says.

As *Kitty* wrapped in Korea, Roe v Wade was overturned in the U.S. "I just remember feeling so defeated and crushed. I told myself, or maybe the universe, that I wanted to contribute something that will help change this up, but I didn't know how. I even said, I could work on a film that was about this."

A few months later, friend and mentor, Lay Lee (*Insecure*, *Euphoria*) sent her *Red, White and Blue*. Koh cried for 20 minutes after reading the script and says everyone associated with the project "truly brought their heart to the film. Everyone was reminded daily what they were doing this for.... They worked their butts off because they understood the gravity and the meaning of this film."

ASIAN A.U. CLUB

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What's on where...

May 2024	22-24	18th Busan Content Market 2024	Busan, Korea
	28	AVIA: Satellite Industry Forum 2024	Singapore
June 2024	6-8	Telefilm Vietnam 2024	Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
	17-18	DW Global Media Forum 2024	Bonn, Germany
	24-27	Sunny Side of the Doc 2024	France
	24-28	29th Shanghai TV Festival 2024	Shanghai, China
July 2024	3-5	15th Content Tokyo 2024	Tokyo, Japan
August 2024	20-24	Beijing International Radio, TV & Film Exhibition 2024	Beijing, China
	27	AVIA: Korea in View 2024	Seoul, Korea
	29	AVIA: Japan in View 2024	Tokyo, Japan
September 2024	3-4	ContentAsia Summit 2024	Taipei, Taiwan
	5	ContentAsia Awards 2024	Taipei, Taiwan
	24-26	APOS 2024	Bali, Indonesia
	26-29	Gwangju Ace Fair 2024	Gwangju, Korea
October 2024	5-8	Asian Contents & Film Market 2024	Busan, Korea
	10	AVIA: Vietnam in View 2024	Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam
	18-20	MipJunior 2024	Cannes, France
	21-24	Mipcom 2024	Cannes, France
	30 Oct-1 Nov	TIFFCOM 2024	Tokyo, Japan
November 2024	12-13	Dubai International Content Market (DICM)	Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai
	20-22	16th Content Tokyo 2024	Chiba, Japan
December 2024	3	AVIA: OTT Summit 2024	Singapore
	3	The ATF Leaders Dialogue 2024	Singapore
	4-6	Asia TV Forum & Market /ATF 2024	Singapore
February 2025	23-27	Mip London 2025	London, U.K.
	24-28	The London TV Screenings 2025	London, U.K.
March 2025	25-27	Series Mania Forum 2025	Lille, Hauts-de-France

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Queen of Tears rules Taiwan

Massive demand for tvN's K-drama – Parrot Analytics

tvN's Korean blockbuster, *Queen of Tears*, swept viewer demand in Taiwan for the week of 3-9 May, attracting more than double the demand of closest competitor, *Paw Patrol*, according to *Parrot Analytics*.

The romantic drama's appeal in Taiwan echoes ratings elsewhere in the region. In Korea, the series' final episode rating was 24.85%, surpassing *Crash Landing on You* to make it tvN's highest-rated series ever. As of 12 May, the

series about a married couple in crisis had been on Netflix global non-English TV top 10 for 10 weeks.

The top digital original – *Shogun* – attracted a fraction of demand for *Queen of Tears*, but enough for it to earn a place on Parrot Analytics' overall demand top 10.

Queen of Tears was also Taiwan's top show on Netflix for the same period.

Mainland Chinese drama, Hunan TV's *The Legend of ShenLi*, was the top Chinese show for the week.

Top 10 overall TV shows: Taiwan

Rank	Title	Difference from Market Average
1	<i>Queen Of Tears</i> (눈물의 여왕)	40.47x
2	<i>PAW Patrol</i>	18.06x
3	<i>Haikyu!!</i> (ハイキュー!!)	17.85x
4	<i>The Legend Of ShenLi</i> (与凤行)	16.1x
5	<i>Shogun</i>	15.94x
6	<i>Game of Thrones</i>	15.46x
7	<i>RuPaul's Drag Race</i>	15.42x
8	<i>Girls Band Cry</i> (ガールズバンドクライ)	15.22x
9	<i>Fallout</i>	15.18x
10	<i>Hazbin Hotel</i>	14.76x

Top 10 digital originals: Taiwan

Rank	Title	Platform	Difference from Market Average
1	<i>Shogun</i>	FX/Disney+	15.94x
2	<i>Fallout</i>	Amazon Prime Video	15.18x
3	<i>Hazbin Hotel</i>	Amazon Prime Video	14.76x
4	<i>Baby Reindeer</i>	Netflix	14.41x
5	<i>Star Wars: The Bad Batch</i>	Disney+	13.33x
6	<i>Bebefinn</i>	Netflix	13.1x
7	<i>Masters of The Air</i>	Apple TV+	13.08x
8	<i>Here We Meet Again</i> (三分野)	Tencent Video	12.95x
9	<i>The Boys</i>	Amazon Prime Video	12.94x
10	<i>Loki</i>	Disney+	12.6x

Date range: 3-9 May 2024

The total audience demand being expressed for a title, within a market. Audience demand reflects the desire, engagement and viewership, weighted by importance; so a stream/download is a higher expression of demand than a 'like'/comment. In this dataset we are comparing the demand that exists for each series in this market, against the average TV show. A difference of 1x represents the market average and 10x means a series is ten times more in demand than the average TV show in this market



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