

coverstory

BY JAY BOBBIN



Tom Hanks stars in the science-fiction movie "Finch," which begins streaming Friday on Apple TV+.

It's not how it was intended, but Tom Hanks has become more of a home-screen presence again.

The two-time Oscar winner largely started his career on the home screen four decades ago. Though he has returned to television occasionally, he seemed destined to remain seen primarily in theaters ... until the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic, of which he and wife Rita Wilson became two of the earliest celebrity "faces."

As a result, Hanks' World War II drama "Greyhound" – for which he also wrote the screenplay – was rerouted from theaters to Apple TV+, where it made its debut in July 2020. His subsequent film, "News of the World," did get a theatrical release but went to premium-video-on-demand after only a few weeks. Now, another Hanks movie is debuting via the streaming route.

Anticipated to be released a year ago, "Finch" also ended up being sold to Apple TV+, and the science-fiction drama will premiere there Friday, Nov. 5. Hanks has the title role of an inventor who's the last man on Earth, prompting him to create an android (portrayed by Caleb Landry Jones) to join him and his dog on a cross-country trek.

Hanks' relationship with home audiences dates back to his guest role on a 1980 episode of "The Love Boat," which was followed soon by "Bosom Buddies," the two-season comedy in which he and Peter Scolari

played friends and co-workers who posed as women to live in an all-female hotel they could afford. That show helped bring Hanks work on such series as "Taxi," "Family Ties" and "Happy Days," and the latter series' Ron Howard helped Hanks' movie career get going by directing him in the 1984 hit "Splash."

Even as Hanks was accruing feature-film credits, television work remained at hand for him, with NBC's "Saturday Night Live" a definite factor. He has hosted that program 10 times (including last year's episode that was the show's first to be done virtually during the pandemic) and appeared on it nine other times.

Other Hanks TV activity largely has been from behind the scenes. His company Playtone has produced several documentary series for CNN ("The Sixties," "The Seventies," etc.), and he also has been an executive producer of Primetime Emmy Award-winning HBO dramas. "From the Earth to the Moon," on which he also acted and directed, was the first; "Band of Brothers" (for which he acted, directed and wrote as well) and "The Pacific" came after that. Currently, Hanks has HBO's military-themed "Masters of the Air" in the works.

Even if the streaming and cable worlds seem to be bringing Hanks home more often these days, then, it's a place he's long been used to being in.

Tom Hanks takes the streaming route again with 'Finch'

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