

Disney+ Original Scripted Series is an Adaptation of Tom Wolfe's Bestseller, Recounting Pioneering Chapter of Historic U.S. Space Race

From Leonardo DiCaprio's Appian Way and Warner Horizon Scripted Television, Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Davisson Are Executive Producers; Mark Lafferty ("Castle Rock," "Halt and Catch Fire") Is Executive Producer and Showrunner

Link to Photos: <https://rumpus.natgeonetworks.com/FI89RfcENVZxqR>

Link to Behind-the-Scenes Trailer: <https://youtu.be/hxAk5LaMue4>

BURBANK, Calif. (May 5, 2020) – Disney+ announced today that the original scripted series “The Right Stuff” from National Geographic will premiere this fall on Disney+. Produced for National Geographic by Appian Way and Warner Horizon Scripted Television, “The Right Stuff” is adapted from Tom Wolfe’s iconic, bestselling nonfiction account of the early days of the U.S. space program.

The eight-episode, scripted series takes a clear-eyed look at what would become America’s first “reality show,” as ambitious astronauts and their families become instant celebrities in a competition that could kill them or make them immortal.

The two men at the center of the story are Major John Glenn, a revered test pilot and committed family man with unwavering principles, portrayed by Patrick J. Adams (“Suits”), and Lieutenant Commander Alan Shepard, one of the best test pilots in Navy history, portrayed by Jake McDorman (“What We Do in the Shadows,” “Lady Bird”).

At the height of the Cold War in 1959, the Soviet Union dominates the space race. To combat a national sentiment of fear and decline, the U.S. government conceives of NASA’s Project Mercury, igniting a space race with the Soviets and making instant celebrities of a handful of the military’s most accomplished test pilots. These individuals, who come to be known as the Mercury Seven, are forged into heroes long before they have achieved a single heroic act. The nation’s best engineers estimate they need several decades to make it into outer space. They are given two years.

The rest of the Mercury Seven includes Lieutenant Gordon Cooper, portrayed by Colin O’Donoghue (“Once Upon a Time,” “Carrie Pilby,” “The Rite”), the youngest of the seven who was selected to everyone’s surprise; Wally Schirra, portrayed by Aaron Staton (“Mad Men,” “Narcos: Mexico,” “Castle Rock”), a competitive pilot with a gift for pulling pranks; Scott Carpenter, portrayed by James Lafferty (“The Haunting of Hill House,” “Small Town Crime”), a soulful man who was dubbed “The Poet” by the other astronauts; Deke Slayton, portrayed by Micah Stock (“Brittany Runs a Marathon,” “Escape at Dannemora”), a taciturn but incredibly intelligent pilot and engineer; and Gus Grissom, portrayed by Michael Trotter (“Underground,” “The Evening Hour”), a no-nonsense test pilot who eventually becomes the second man in space.

The astronauts' strengths are equaled only by their flaws. As the men succumb to the temptations that surround them, Project Mercury threatens to come apart. At the heart of the historic drama populated by deeply human characters are two men who become icons — Glenn and Shepard — as they jockey to be the first man in space. The entire program is nearly brought to its knees by their intense rivalry.

The series also follows NASA's engineers, who work against the clock as pressures mount from Washington and a transfixed public. And we witness the underbelly of a myth-making propaganda machine headed by NASA's PR department and aided by the writers and editors at LIFE Magazine.

"This true story of scientific innovation and human perseverance could not be more timely," said Courteney Monroe, president, National Geographic Global Television Networks. "National Geographic's *The Right Stuff* is an aspirational story about exploration, ambition, determination and resilience and reminds us that human beings can achieve the extraordinary when united by a common purpose. This series provides a compelling behind-the-scenes look at the flawed, but heroic Mercury 7 astronauts and we are thrilled that it has found its perfect home on Disney+."

"As our audiences around the world turn to Disney+ to find inspiration and optimism, we believe the true-life heroism of the Mercury 7 will showcase the tenacity of the human spirit and inspire a new generation to reach for the stars," said Ricky Strauss, president, Content & Marketing, Disney+. "The wonderful team of storytellers at National Geographic, Warner Horizon Scripted Television and Appian Way have crafted a compelling and entertaining tale and we are honored to give it a global home as the first scripted Disney+ original series from National Geographic."

"Tom Wolfe's book brilliantly captured a critical moment in American history that really resonated with all of us at Appian Way and Nat Geo," noted Davisson, "Disney+ is the perfect partner to bring forth this story of what it takes to truly achieve something extraordinary, but also the personal costs of that ambition."

Added Lafferty, "*The Right Stuff* evokes the wonder and awe of the moment we first escaped the bounds of our only home and ventured into the unknown. But the show is as much about who we are today as it is about our historic achievements. At a time when the world is confronted with significant challenges, this story reminds us that what seems impossible today can become the triumph of tomorrow."

The rest of the ensemble cast includes Nora Zehetner ("*Brick*," "*Creative Control*") as Annie Glenn, the wife of John Glenn and his childhood sweetheart who has a speech impairment that can sometimes make communication difficult; Eloise Mumford ("*Fifty Shades of Grey*" franchise) as Trudy Cooper, Gordon Cooper's wife and an accomplished pilot herself, with her rocky marriage to Gordon providing conflict throughout the season; and Shannon Lucio ("*Prison Break*," "*True Blood*") as Louise Shepard, Alan Shepard's devoted and long-suffering wife.

Patrick Fischler ("*Twin Peaks*," "*Mad Men*") plays Bob Gilruth, a soft-spoken rocket scientist who is the partner of the more brash Chris Kraft, who is portrayed by Eric Ladin ("*American Sniper*"). They are critical members of NASA's Space Task group, charged by President Dwight Eisenhower with putting a man

into space faster than seems humanly possible. They're racing against the clock as pressures mount from Washington and a transfixed public.

As the Mercury 7 astronauts are thrust into the public eye, NASA's PR department goes into overdrive to paint the perfect picture, aided by the writers and editors at LIFE Magazine. Danny Strong ("Billions") plays John "Shorty" Powers, NASA's omnipresent PR man, constantly taking the astronauts on glad-handing trips to factories and rubber-chicken dinners in order to spur public enthusiasm, and thus, appropriations from congress for the space program. Josh Cooke ("Grace and Frankie," "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel") plays Loudon Wainwright Jr., LIFE Magazine's star reporter, who is tasked with writing the biographies of all seven astronauts and has the keenest look at what's really transpiring.

Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Davisson are executive producers, along with Mark Lafferty ("Castle Rock," "Halt and Catch Fire"), who is showrunner. Chris Long ("The Americans," "The Mentalist") directed and executive produced the first episode. Will Staples ("Animals," "Shooter") and Howard Korder ("Boardwalk Empire") are also executive producers. Academy Award® winner Thelma Schoonmaker ("Raging Bull," "GoodFellas," "The Departed") and Emmy® winner Danny Strong ("Empire," "The Hunger Games" movies, "Game Change") are consulting producers. Michael Hampton shepherded this project on behalf of Appian Way and is co-producer.

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About Disney+

Disney+ is the dedicated streaming home for movies and shows from Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars, National Geographic, and more. As part of Disney's Direct-to-Consumer and International (DTCI) segment, Disney+ is available on most internet-connected devices and offers commercial-free programming with a variety of original feature-length films, documentaries, live-action and animated series and short-form content. Alongside unprecedented access to Disney's incredible library of film and television entertainment, the service is also the exclusive streaming home for the latest releases from The Walt Disney Studios. Disney+ is available as part of a bundle offer that gives subscribers access to Disney+, Hulu (ad-supported), and ESPN+. Visit DisneyPlus.com to subscribe and/or learn more about the service.

About National Geographic Partners LLC

National Geographic Partners LLC (NGP), a joint venture between The Walt Disney Company and the National Geographic Society, is committed to bringing the world premium science, adventure and exploration content across an unrivaled portfolio of media assets. NGP combines the global National Geographic television channels (National Geographic Channel, Nat Geo WILD, Nat Geo MUNDO, Nat Geo PEOPLE) with National Geographic's media and consumer-oriented assets, including National Geographic magazines; National Geographic studios; related digital and social media platforms; books; maps; children's media; and ancillary activities that include travel, global experiences and events, archival sales, licensing and e-commerce businesses. Furthering knowledge and understanding of our world has been the core purpose of National Geographic for 132 years, and now we are committed to going deeper, pushing boundaries, going further for our consumers ... and reaching millions of people around the world in 172 countries and 43 languages every month as we do it. NGP returns 27 percent of our proceeds to the nonprofit National Geographic Society to fund work in the areas of science, exploration, conservation and education. For more information visit natgeotv.com or nationalgeographic.com, or find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/natgeo), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/natgeo), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/natgeo), [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/natgeo), [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/natgeo) and [Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com/natgeo).

About Appian Way

Appian Way Productions is a Los Angeles-based film and television production company founded by Leonardo DiCaprio. Jennifer Davisson serves as president of production. Since its launch, Appian Way has released a diverse slate of films, including Alejandro Iñárritu's three-time Academy Award® and Golden Globe® winner The Revenant, Martin Scorsese's Academy Award®- and Golden Globe®- nominated The Wolf of Wall Street and Academy Award®-nominated and Golden Globe®-winning The Aviator, along with Shutter Island, Scott Cooper's Out of the Furnace, George Clooney's Golden Globe®-nominated The Ides of March, the psychological thriller Orphan and the film adaptation of Dennis Lehane's critically acclaimed novel Live by Night with Ben Affleck, among others. Currently in post production on The Right Stuff based on the acclaimed Tom Wolfe book for National Geographic.

The company has put forth strong efforts to gain headway in the documentary world, especially as it pertains to progressive environmental change. Appian Way recently worked in partnership with the History Channel on "Frontiersman," and National Geographic to produce "Before the Flood," a documentary film that sheds light on that aforementioned change. It also worked with Netflix on the Academy Award®-nominated Virunga, directed by Orlando von Einsiedel, and Kip Anderson's Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret. Appian is in partnership with Netflix on several additional documentaries, including critically acclaimed The Ivory Game, How to Change the World and Catching the Sun. Recently released projects included; Sea of Shadows with National Geographic which won the Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival, Ice on Fire with HBO along with And We Go Green which premiered at the Toronto Film Festival.

About Warner Horizon Scripted Television

A division of the Warner Bros. Television Group, Warner Horizon Scripted Television was founded in 2006 and is one of the entertainment industry's leading producers of dramatic and comedic programming for the cable and subscription/on-demand streaming marketplace. Series produced by Warner Horizon Scripted Television include "Animal Kingdom" and "Claws" for TNT, "Cherish the Day," "David Makes Man" and "Queen Sugar" for OCN, "The Flight Attendant" for HBO Max, "Fuller House," "Medical Police," "Special" and "You" for Netflix, "Pennyworth" for EPIX, and "The Right Stuff" for National Geographic and Disney+.

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