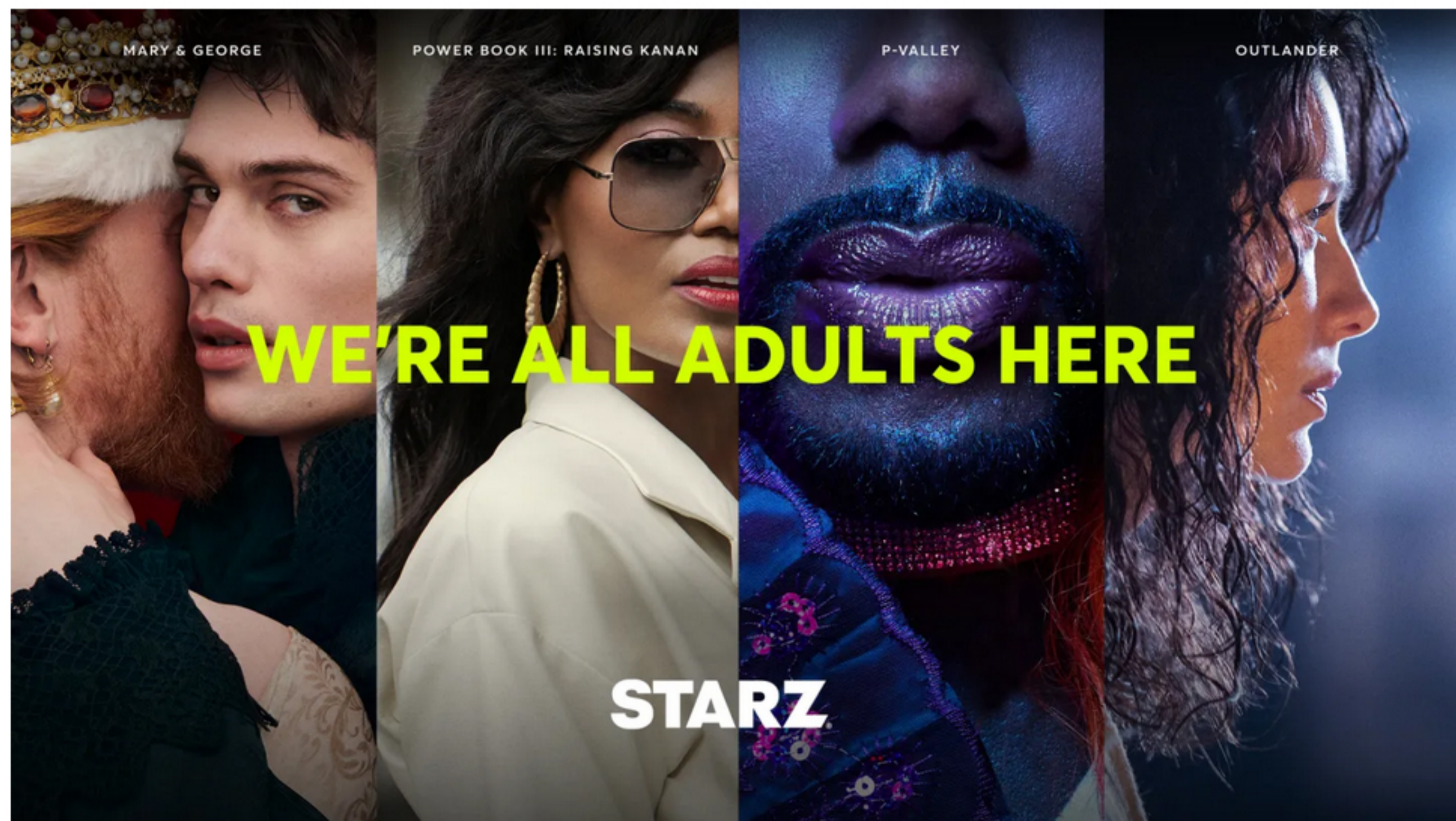


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# Switch On to STARZ

How STARZ is taking the lead in representation.

BY THR STAFF  SEPTEMBER 11, 2024 9:00AM



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*This story was created in paid partnership with Starz.*

Long before entertainment companies started to issue inclusion commitments and proclaim diversity quotas, STARZ focused its business strategy around serving women and underrepresented audiences. Over a decade ago, it put *Outlander* and *Power* on the air, and the success of each of those shows helped define and cultivate what is now the network's company-wide #TakeTheLead commitment.

Alison Hoffman, president of STARZ Networks, says, "In an era where streaming services are clamoring to have something for everyone — sports, reality, kids and animation — STARZ has the advantage of focus. We are premium, curated and we have a track record of groundbreaking scripted entertainment serving our target audiences."



Alison Hoffman, President, STARZ Networks | Credit: STARZ

This commitment to amplifying narratives by, about and for women and underrepresented audiences has remained strong at STARZ while countless companies across a range of industries have pulled back on diversity commitments. The streaming platform hopes that by taking the lead and remaining dedicated to inclusion on- and offscreen, and throughout the company, as well as through its commitment to bold, unapologetic stories and characters, it will inspire others across the industry.

*Outlander* and *Power* resonated strongly and quickly with audiences, showing executives at STARZ that each of these series, while wildly different, was exactly what their target audiences were looking for. That audience reception has only grown over the past decade, proving that STARZ's strategy to focus its efforts on underserved audiences was not only the right thing to do for viewers who had rarely seen themselves represented onscreen, but was the right strategy from a business perspective, as well. STARZ has always been profitable, growing its streaming audience and holding revenue steady in the face of significant industry headwinds.

Each of these series has not only been successful for 10 years and running, but STARZ continues to show its confidence in and commitment to each of them — developing them into full-blown franchises with no end in sight. An *Outlander* prequel, *Outlander: Blood of My Blood*, is set to premiere in 2025, and *Power* has spawned several spinoffs including *Power Book II: Ghost*, *Power Book III: Raising Kanan*, *Power Book IV: Force* and is currently in development on a *Power* prequel.

Beyond these two juggernaut franchises, STARZ has built a robust slate using the #TakeTheLead programming mandate as its north star for all content decisions. The critically acclaimed *P-Valley* by Pulitzer Prize- and Olivier Award-winning playwright Katori Hall and *BMF*, executive produced by Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson, are among some of the network's most popular series, resonating particularly strongly with Black viewers. Rounding out its slate of content for women, STARZ has recently brought audiences *Mary & George* starring Julianne Moore and *The Serpent Queen* starring Samantha Morton, with highly anticipated upcoming premieres including *Three Women* starring Shailene Woodley and *Sweetpea* starring Ella Purnell.

Its dedication to representation not only on camera, but off camera, is clear. The network has hired several first-time showrunners, boasts a number of shows that are heavily run and staffed by women or people of color, and has given some of its talent opportunities to direct for the first time. And at a time when pipeline programs for underrepresented creative talent are underresourced, STARZ has increased its pipeline programs. It has recently partnered with Alliance of Women Directors, The Blackhouse Foundation, Newfilmmakers LA, National Association of Latino Independent Producers, Inevitable Foundation, Coalition of Asian Pacifics in Entertainment and Diverse Representation.

Hoffman says, "We are proud of the opportunity that our platform extends to the creative community. We empower them to tell the stories they want to tell — authentically, uninterrupted and uncensored."

Being intentional about representation both on and off camera, including betting on new, fresh voices in key creative roles like showrunners, directors and writers, has been the foundation for STARZ content that pushes the boundaries of what television can be. When audiences switch STARZ on, they are met with a fearless approach to content that is sophisticated, gripping and provocative. The themes are thought-provoking and challenging, and its characters are unapologetically complex, nuanced and imperfect.

"We are truly distinct from our competitors, creating a singular space for discerning, adult audiences. Grown-ups seek grown-up entertainment, and that is the principle that guides all of our brand and programming decisions," says Hoffman.

Beyond having a slate that allows women and underrepresented audiences to feel seen, STARZ's #TakeTheLead commitment can also be seen throughout the company, extending through its leadership ranks. The majority of the company's senior roles are women — most of them women of color.

This unwavering dedication to representation that touches every part of what the company does is undoubtedly something that STARZ is taking the lead on in the industry, and that strategy is paying off. [THR](#)