YouTube promotes channels, pledges $200 mil in ads

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NEW YORK (AP) -- In a flashy presentation to advertisers, YouTube promoted its new channels of original programming, while pledging to spend $200 million to help market them.

That's roughly twice what the Google Inc.-owned video site has spent launching some 100 channels of niche-oriented programming. The channels are an ambitious initiative from YouTube, approximately halfway through its rollout.

YouTube hyped the initiative Wednesday night at New York's Beacon Theatre, where it urged advertisers to purchase spots alongside its new programs. It was YouTube's first "upfront," an annual TV tradition of getting advertisers to purchase ads to their upcoming programming slates.

Robert Kyncl, YouTube's global head of content, pledged that YouTube will spend more than $200 million to market the channels across Google and its advertising network. After years of relying largely on user-created videos, YouTube has increasingly focused on partnering with premium content providers to lure audiences for longer viewings and attract advertisers with higher quality videos.

YouTube also announced three new channels, including one called Wigs that will focus on scripted dramas for women. It's created by producer Jon Avnet ("Black Swan," "Fried Green Tomatoes") and director Rodrigo Garcia ("Albert Nobbs," "In Treatment") and features the actresses Virginia Madsen, Julia Stiles and Jennifer Beals.

Also newly announced is a TeamUSA channel from the U.S. Olympic Committee that will feature content ahead of the 2012 games. Tribeca Enterprises, the parent company of the Tribeca Film Festival, is also creating a channel in partnership with YouTube veteran Maker Studios. That channel, dubbed the Picture Show, will debut later this year.

The event Wednesday was the last in a two-week series of upfronts from digital companies, including Hulu and Yahoo. It's the first concerted effort from Internet-based outlets to pose as TV networks. The Web destinations have sought to convince advertisers to purchase ads online, arguing that that's where viewers are migrating.

YouTube concluded their event with a surprise performance from Jay-Z, who created the YouTube channel Life and Times.

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