

Addison Rae was just the first: These TikTokers have their eye on Hollywood, too

Addison Rae and the Hype House have found mainstream success. But they aren't the only TikTokers making the leap into Hollywood careers.

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From left: TikTokers Jack Martin, Anania Williams, Aïssata Diallo, Johnny Berchtold, Bailey Spinnenweber, Emily Uribe, Louella Gaskell, Ash Bjørn and Ava Tetteh-Ocloo.

CONTRIBUTED

The reach of TikTok is no longer confined to the popular app's "For You" pages. More and more, the platform is becoming a launching pad for the next wave of breakout stars.

Just in the past year, dancer Addison Rae (87.2 million followers) turned her online fame into a starring role in a major remake and a multifilm deal with Netflix; sister influencers Charli (138.2million followers) and Dixie D'Amelio (57.1 million followers) scored a reality-television series on Hulu; and a creator collective known as the Hype House (19.8 million followers) landed their own Netflix reality series.

These influencers are the closest to household-name status, but they're far from the only ones nearing success in show business, all the while raking in millions through their shrewd business ventures.

As content creators increasingly transform viral popularity into genuine star power, meet some of the TikTok stars lighting up Hollywood – and those chasing the afterglow.

More: Can TikTok stars make it big in Hollywood? Well, it's starting to happen.

Jack Martin

TikTok handle: @jackmartin (737,900 followers, 36.5 million likes)

Featured in: NBC's "La Brea"

Jack Martin went from posting quirky videos on TikTok to landing a starring role in the NBC sci-fi drama "La Brea."

A graduate of Georgetown University, Martin, 23, majored in politics, but realized he was more interested in the entertainment industry and considered becoming an agent. He took a summer class at the University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts, interned for a management company and joined a New York University acting program.

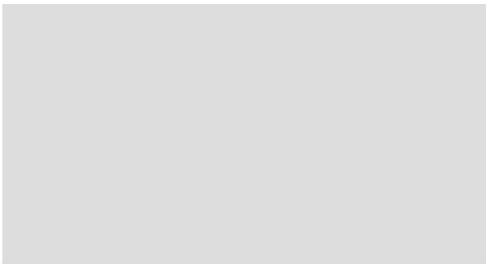
TikTok changed everything. He began posting humorous skits and "ranting" videos sharing stories about his life. After hitting 8,000 followers, he was contacted by his current manager, which changed the game: Martin went from bartending and going to open casting calls to having "meetings at all the big agencies" a few months later.

Though his agents say they don't use social media numbers when pitching him for projects, Martin notes his following is what got



him representation in the first place, "which led to everything."

"I'm a massive evangelist for social media," he says. "It's the first time in history you can post what you want and millions will see it. You'd be crazy not to take advantage of that."



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Anania Williams

TikTok handle: @anania00 (2.1 million followers, 163 million likes)

Featured in: Netflix's "Don't Look Up"

There are worse silver screen debuts to make than appearing in the shot of an Oscar-nominated movie where Jennifer Lawrence and Timothée Chalamet are making out.

When 21-year-old Anania Williams graduates from Emerson College this May, the musical theater major with peace and social justice minors will already have Adam McKay's "Don't Look Up" on their resume.

Williams, whose pronouns are he/they, joined TikTok in the summer of 2020 making videos in response to the Black Lives Matter protests. From there, Williams branched out into a variety of video topics: drag makeup tutorials, original poetry, singing videos and boisterous rants about the topics du jour while walking home.

Williams landed a background role in 2021's "Don't Look Up" through a Boston casting agency. In the film, Williams can be spotted sitting next to Chalamet – a mind-blowing job for the newbie in his first movie experience. McKay told the small group of actors to improvise conversations as they sat with drinks in the parking lot set.



"The most affirming moment of my career to date is making Jennifer Lawrence laugh," Williams says. "Like, come on. That is everything."

In the scene, Williams is wearing the same yellow beanie frequently worn in his TikTok videos, a lucky bit of "free marketing" that came about after Williams wore the hat to a meeting with the costume team who decided it was a perfect look for the film.

As graduation approaches, Williams hopes to leverage TikTok fame and their appearance in "Don't Look Up" into becoming a full-fledged professional entertainer. In the meantime, building a community with femme Black creators and sharing creative ideas through TikTok is a worthwhile endeavor (and a way to pay the bills).

"I'm hungry for more," Williams says. "I'm trying to take every day as it comes, audition for everything I can and advocate for myself."





Anania Williams (left, wearing his signature yellow beanie) appeared in a scene with Timothee Chalamet and Jennifer Lawrence in Netflix's Oscar-nominated disaster film "Don't Look Up."

MARC VASCONCELLOS/THE ENTERPRISE



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Aïssata Diallo

TikTok handle: @aissatadiallo (267,500 followers, 4.8 million likes)

Featured in: CBS' reality show "Love Island"

Although it was never Aïssata Diallo's "plan to be a creator," she's managed to amass millions of likes on TikTok and landed a spot on the inaugural season of CBS' reality show "Love Island" in 2019. Diallo, 28, says the series' casting director found her on Instagram and contacted her via direct message.

"It was the first season, so having people who are looking for love but also have a social media presence would possibly help the show gain traction from viewers," Diallo says.

She added: "TikTok-famous influencers are like the new celebrities. Now you see celebrities trying to collaborate with these influencers on TikTok because they know these (people) are the future."

Diallo dreams of playing a princess and action hero on the big



screen, but says creators of color often have a steeper hill to climb when it comes to gaining recognition or expanding their popularity. Diallo experienced this firsthand when a TikTok video of hers on the verge of getting 2 million views was removed from the platform “out of nowhere” and without explanation from TikTok.

“I was confused because I was fully dressed, and all I was doing was my makeup,” Diallo recalls of the video, which she eventually reuploaded. “It wasn’t anything that went against the guidelines that TikTok has. Whereas you see people who don’t look like me who are explicit in their content, their content doesn’t get taken down – it goes viral all the time.”

She added: “For us Black creators, influencers of color, we cannot just do the bare minimum. We actually have to do a lot more to be seen and to go viral.”



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Johnny Berchtold

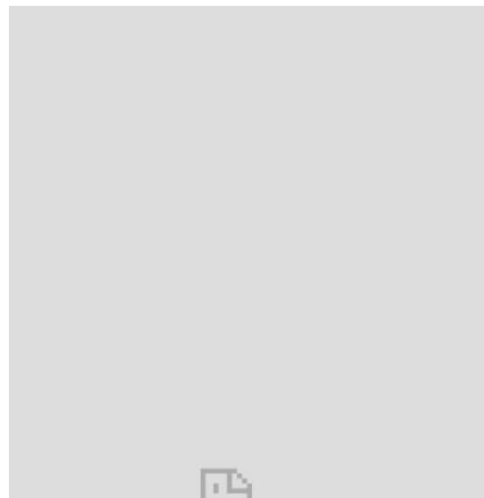
TikTok handle: @johnny_berchtold (392,100 followers, 17.2 million likes)

Featured in: Amazon Prime's show "The Wilds," coming Starz political thriller series "Gaslit"

Johnny Berchtold began working in the entertainment industry before joining TikTok. But he's well aware that the digital world has elevated his and others' acting career.

"I love this new era of technology and Hollywood working in tandem," says Berchtold, 27. "There's so many underrepresented people who are getting the spotlight who have always deserved (it) and now they're taking matters into their own hands."

Berchtold was attending University of the Arts in Philadelphia and experimenting with YouTube and Vine when he submitted a reel to an ABC digital talent competition that invited online voters to choose their favorite aspiring performer.

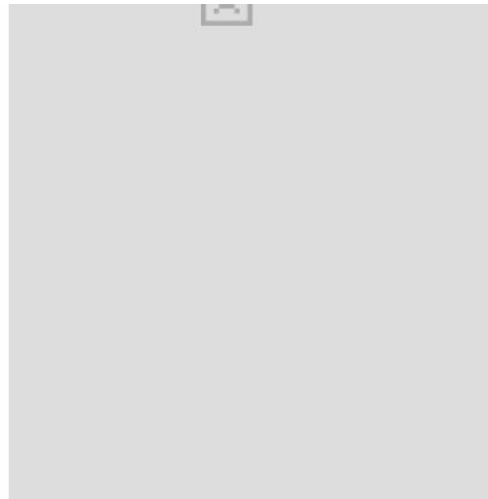


He won, landing himself a trip to LA to meet industry professionals. More recently, he's begun posting TikTok videos that lovingly parody common movie and TV tropes.

Following a few minor TV roles, Berchtold was cast in the 2020 Amazon Prime drama "The Wilds," his first project since gaining TikTok fame (some of his co-stars had even seen his videos). And his videos have since helped him score a starring role in an upcoming film that required both dramatic and comedic acting – his audition focused on drama, but the director spotted Berchtold's comedic side through his TikTok videos.

"Thank God he thought they were funny," he says. "He said that is what pushed the decision over the edge to cast me. It's really interesting how (TikTok and Hollywood) almost work hand-in hand."

Next up: Berchtold will appear in the Netflix film "Dog Gone" opposite Rob Lowe and alongside a slew of major stars including Julia Roberts and Sean Penn in the political thriller "Gaslit" (out on Starz April 24).



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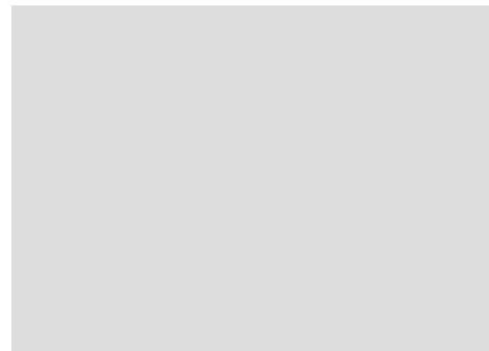
Bailey Spinnenweber

TikTok handle: @baileyspinn (11 million followers, 458.1 million likes)

Career aspirations: Singer, actor

While Bailey Spinnenweber hopes to lead a romance film and record her own music, her journey as an aspiring entertainer began on TikTok, where she's branded herself as "the pov girl" in one-sided skits, in which she comedically explores fictional scenarios such as "you and your soulmate share a bank account."

"I had never really thought of my videos as acting before that, 'cause I was just lip-syncing and there was a sound," says Spinnenweber, 19. "And then I started to actually use my voice



and people were like, 'Hey, you can act' or 'Hey, we like your voice; we didn't know you could do this.' Through her multipart video series, "I realized maybe I wouldn't be so bad at acting, and I could really turn this into something real if I apply myself more and learn the basics of it."

Spinnenweber says she's in talks to be represented by an acting and music agency, an opportunity she chalks up entirely to her online presence. She says her social media background gives her leverage in crossing over into traditional entertainment.

"Because I already have such a big platform and so many people and young children look up to me, I have a little bit more power in the industry to begin with, because I can go and present my talent that I've already been representing on my platform, and they can see that I've applied myself ... and how much I'm willing to work," Spinnenweber says.

Spinnenweber has also been able to parlay her digital recognition into a sustainable income through paid collaborations, scoring deals with major brands such as Steve Madden, Aeropostale and Netflix. The money made from these collaborations – she earned a mid six-figure income in 2021 alone – has allowed her to become a full-time influencer.



“Now, I have never had so much time to make whatever content I wanna make during the day,” Spinnenweber says. “It’s my job: It’s my whole life right now.”



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Emily Uribe

TikTok handle: @emilyuuribe (860,100 followers, 109.4 million likes)

Career aspirations: Red carpet host, actor

Emily Uribe was in the break room of her retail job when she filmed the first video of herself pretending to be interviewed like



a celebrity. Two years later, her TikTok videos jokingly feigning fame have landed her invitations to some of the hottest movie premieres in Hollywood.

Currently a film major at California State University, Northridge, Uribe, 22, is working on using her online success to leverage a career in Hollywood. Getting invited to walk the red carpet for premieres of "West Side Story," "The Eternals" and "Moonfall" may seem to some like "skipping a step," but she stresses wanting to put the work in as a production assistant, background actor or red carpet correspondent first.

"I want to pay my dues," Uribe says. "If I'm going to go into this industry, I want to make sure people know that I want to work hard."

While having a following can serve as a sort of "loophole" to get noticed, it's not an automatic golden ticket to success, she notes. She has a manager and has worked on brand partnerships with Disney and Marvel, but not having an agent makes breaking into the industry more difficult.

"I don't have anyone advocating for me on the acting side, so I



find myself having to work just as hard as actors who don't have a following on social media," Uribe says.



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Louella Gaskell

TikTok handle: @louellagaskell (2,237 followers, 18.4k likes)

Career aspirations: Actor

Although Louella Gaskell has found the most exposure on TikTok, it was her comedic presence on Instagram that put her in the running for the starring role in an indie film last year.

In March 2021, Gaskell says she was added to a short list of actors asked to submit a tape for the role after the film's casting director, who followed her on Instagram and would regularly engage with her content, spotted Gaskell's profile on a casting directory website.

While Gaskell, 26, didn't end up getting the role, she says the experience helped shift her thinking on incorporating authenticity into her social media presence.

"I was just gaining confidence to be myself online and not really care whether I had a big social media following," Gaskell says. "You realize it doesn't really matter what people think, but there was that chance thing where someone somewhere went, 'That girl is an actress and we can see her personality through her social media, so we'll see her for the role.' "





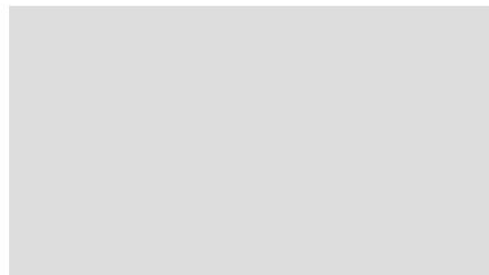
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Ash Bjørn

TikTok handle: @actinganimagus (294,800 followers, 9.1 million likes)

Career aspirations: Actor

Fusing his love of cinematic icons and cosplay, Ash Bjørn has built an online following with his pop cultural impersonations, which include Spider-Man, Batman and James Potter from "Harry Potter." Bjørn, 21, says his social media platforms "are basically one big self-tape in a way. It's a way for me to make stuff I enjoy and would like to see and stuff I would produce in the future given the chance, but just on a way smaller scale."



And Bjørn says having a social media presence can definitely improve an actor's prospects.

"I've noticed that if I mention that I have an established platform when doing auditions ... there is a bigger chance that I'll be, not pushed to the front of the line, but I'll at least be in the line," Bjørn says.

Bjørn says that while he sporadically monetizes his content, social media is a tool for improving his professional mobility rather than a viable source of income.

"I'm not going to be making my money or living off of social media: I want to be living off of acting," Bjørn says. "If social media can help me with that, I'll definitely be doing that, but if that loses its spark, then I'll look for other ways."



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Ava Tetteh-Ocloo

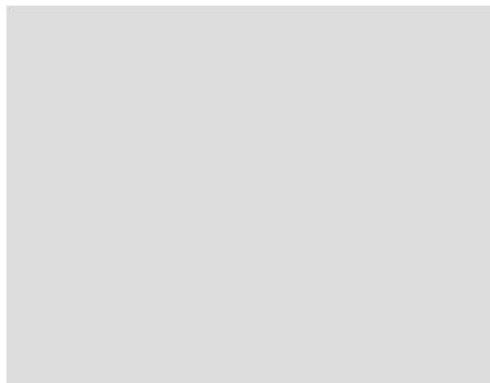
TikTok handle: @ava_tocloo (2 million followers, 117.4 million likes)

Career aspirations: Reality-television star

For Ava Tetteh-Ocloo, what started off as “a little spam account on Instagram” to entertain herself and friends unwittingly laid the foundation for an audience of millions on TikTok, as well as brand deals with H&M, Journeys and Reebok.

Now, reality television is a career avenue Tetteh-Ocloo, 18, has her eye on. She says the authenticity of her social media content provides an advantage in presenting herself to the industry.

“If you just go on my page, watch any of my videos, you’ll see



who I am, what I represent,” she says.

Tetteh-Ocloo is already capturing the interest of the entertainment industry. She says she was considered as a cast member for Season 3 of the Paramount+ series “AwesomenessTV’s Next Influencer,” but the timing wasn’t right for her.

“I kind of underestimated how much it would be to be perceived by that many people because I’m just used to it being my own account, my own followers,” Tetteh-Ocloo says. “I feel like I need to prepare myself more to be observed by that many people.”

Contributing: Marco della Cava



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