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Why ‘Yellowstone’ Mastermind Taylor Sheridan Decided to Ditch Paramount

The creator of hits like ‘Tulsa King’ and ‘Landman’ is leaving the entertainment company after tension with new Paramount CEO David Ellison’s leadership team

By [Joe Flint](#) Updated Oct. 27, 2025 10:53 pm ET



Taylor Sheridan arriving at the Season 5 premiere of Paramount’s ‘Yellowstone’ in 2022.
Richard Rodriguez/Getty Images for Paramount

Quick Summary

Taylor Sheridan, creator of “Yellowstone,” is leaving Paramount for NBCUniversal due to disagreements with new CEO David Ellison’s team.

Taylor Sheridan doesn’t like to be told what to do or how to do it.

At his longtime home studio Paramount, the “Yellowstone” creator was given a long leash to make his shows the way he wanted. He was seldom challenged about scripts or budgets.

With new Chief Executive David Ellison at the helm after Paramount’s merger with Skydance, Sheridan saw that comfortable arrangement eroding, according to people familiar with the creative’s thinking.

In several meetings with Ellison and his team at Sheridan’s Texas ranch, the prolific producer was put off by their suggestions for potential new television shows, a decision to pass on a project and questions about his spending, the people said.

Now, the creator of several hits for Paramount, including “Tulsa King,” “Lioness” and “Landman,” is leaving the media and entertainment company after disagreements with Ellison and his leadership team, people close to Sheridan said.



Sheridan with ‘Yellowstone’ co-stars Kelly Reilly and Kevin Costner in 2018 Presley Ann/Getty Images

While his TV deal at Paramount still has more than three years left to go, Sheridan decided to sign a contract to make TV shows and movies for NBCUniversal, The Wall Street Journal reported Sunday.

That five-year deal could be worth as much as \$1 billion, depending on the success of Sheridan’s projects, according to people familiar with the agreement.

Under the terms of the agreement, Sheridan can make movies for NBCU as early as next year and television shows starting in 2029. He plans to remain involved in the shows he makes for Paramount and its Paramount+ streaming service through the end of his current deal, people familiar with the agreement said.

NBCUniversal has also signed a first-look deal with Sheridan's longtime production partner 101 Studios that takes effect in 2026.

Puck earlier reported on Sheridan's plans to leave Paramount for NBCU.

The power of 'Yellowstone'

Sheridan is one of the most important creatives at Paramount. Several of his shows played a major role in putting the Paramount+ streaming service on the map, though "Yellowstone" itself, which ran on the Paramount cable network, streams reruns on NBCU's streaming service Peacock in the U.S.

Losing Sheridan could be a black eye for Ellison, who took the helm of Paramount in August and is spending heavily on deals to revive the struggling company. Later this week, Paramount is expected to lay off about 1,000 employees across the company's U.S. operations. Another round of cuts is expected in the coming weeks.



Sheridan on the set of 'Landman.' Emerson Miller/Paramount+

At the same time, Ellison is trying to acquire rival media giant Warner Bros. Discovery, submitting several unsuccessful offers for the parent of the Warner Bros. movie and television studios and HBO Max streaming platform, the Journal has reported.

Sheridan's decision to depart shows the delicate line executives like Ellison have to walk in trying to foster talent while maintaining some control and managing costs. Ellison wanted to keep Sheridan in the fold but felt the previous regime was too deferential, a person familiar with his thinking said.

Sheridan wasn't pleased with the departure of Paramount executive Chris McCarthy, who steered much of Sheridan's work through Paramount+, the people close to the star writer and producer said.

"Yellowstone" made its debut in 2018 during a period in which Paramount executives were frustrated to see in-house talent like comedian Amy Schumer and director J.J. Abrams routinely work with rival studios on movies and other projects. They wanted their own marquee producers and stars that were unquestionably Paramount, and Sheridan fit the bill.

"Yellowstone" soon made him one of the company's most valuable producers. The studio granted him unusual spending power. Production on Sheridan shows topped half a billion dollars a year, with the spinoff "1923" costing \$22 million an episode, or roughly \$500,000-a-minute, to produce, the Journal reported in 2023.

A rejected pitch

The relationship between Sheridan and Ellison's team quickly went south, the people close to the producer said. A film script Sheridan pitched was rejected by the new team at Paramount's movie studio. Sheridan felt disrespected, especially given that he had a solid movie record, having written "Sicario" and "Hell or High Water," the people close to him said.

Ellison also suggested ideas to Sheridan, such as a series tied to America's 250th anniversary, the people familiar with the matter said. While Sheridan's shows about tough men contending with a changing world appeal to red-state audiences, he did not want to get overtly political.

Sheridan was particularly aggrieved when the budget on his Paramount+ show "Lioness," a spy series starring Zoe Saldana and Nicole Kidman, was challenged. A person familiar with Paramount's thinking acknowledged they are looking at budgets differently than previous management.

Further irking Sheridan: Paramount tapped Kidman to star in a new Paramount+ legal drama called "Discretion" without telling him, one of the people familiar with the matter said, a decision that could impact the timing of shoots for the show.

After several meetings with Ellison and other company leaders, Sheridan's team decided to begin talks for a new producing home, people familiar with the matter said.



Sheridan has a cameo in 'Lioness' with star Zoe Saldana. Lauren Smith/Paramount+
They met with Warner Bros. Discovery and Comcast's CMCSA 0.48% increase; green
up pointing triangle NBCU, people with knowledge of those discussions said.
A final agreement was quietly reached earlier this month.

Donna Langley, chairman of NBCUniversal Entertainment, who was heavily involved
in wooing Sheridan to Universal over the past two months, made a pilgrimage to his
ranch to help seal the deal.

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Corrections & Amplifications

Sheridan can make movies for NBCU as early as next year and television shows
starting in 2029. An earlier version of this article incorrectly said Ellison can make
movies for NBCU as early as next year and television shows starting in 2029.
(Corrected on Oct. 27)
