

WikiLeaks Founder Gets Show on RT

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Assange, pictured in London last month, will film the series from Britain. **Kirsty Wigglesworth**

Controversial WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has a new talk show that will be broadcast on the Kremlin-funded English-language channel RT, formerly known as Russia Today, the television station said Wednesday.

❑ WikiLeaks had said in a statement Monday that Assange's show would begin airing in March, but there was no word on who would air it or how it would be produced.

❑ RT television stepped forward Wednesday to say it will be broadcasting the show, a series of 10 interviews with what it described as "key political players, thinkers and revolutionaries — figures who in the author's opinion will be shaping the political agenda of tomorrow."

Earlier in the week, the cyber-transparency activist said he would create a new brand of talk show built around the theme of "the world tomorrow," promising to give viewers a steady dose of controversy. ❑

WikiLeaks said in a statement on its site that "iconoclasts, visionaries and power insiders" would be brought in so that Assange could challenge them on their vision of world affairs

and "their ideas on how to secure a brighter future."

✘The names of the guests are still to be disclosed.

✘The RT statement said Assange is filming the series from the location of his house arrest in Britain. He is currently fighting extradition to Sweden, where he is wanted on sex crimes allegations. United States officials are weighing possible charges linked to the leaks, the biggest disclosures of secret documents in U.S. history.

WikiLeaks argues that Assange is uniquely qualified for the role given his past as "a pioneer for a more just world and a victim of political repression."

Television image experts weren't so sure that Assange is ready for prime time.

"Assange has got a good, deep voice and an agreeable Aussie accent, but he's a slow, deliberate talker and not especially televisual," said Ellis Cashmore, an expert on celebrity culture at England's Staffordshire University. "To be true to his image, he would have to make his proposed show subversive; and that might not appeal to many would-be guests."

✘RT claims a global reach of more than 430 million people, or 22 percent of all cable subscribers worldwide.

✘"We're proud to host Julian Assange's new project," editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan said in the statement. "RT has rallied a global audience of open-minded people who don't take things around them for granted."

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