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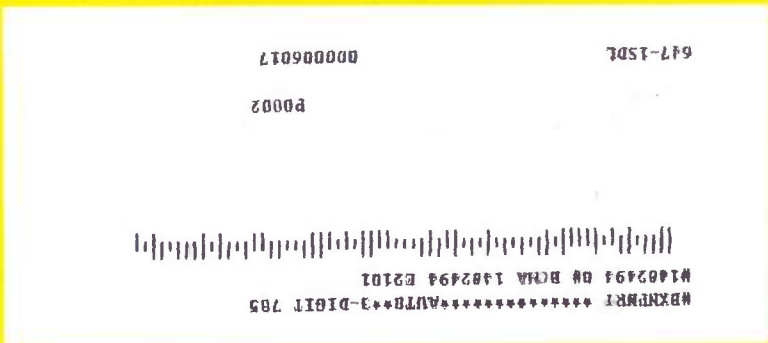
THE BUSINESS OF VIDEO CONTENT

TECH LEADERSHIP Stars of 2021

B+C honors a field of standout technology
execs from diverse segments of the industry



VOLUME 151 • NUMBER 3 • MARCH 22, 2021 • \$6.95



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8 COVER STORY

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Dove Channel Joins Frndly TV's Profitable vMVPD Offering

Family-oriented service ended 2020 with 440,000 paid subscribers



By Jon Lafayette
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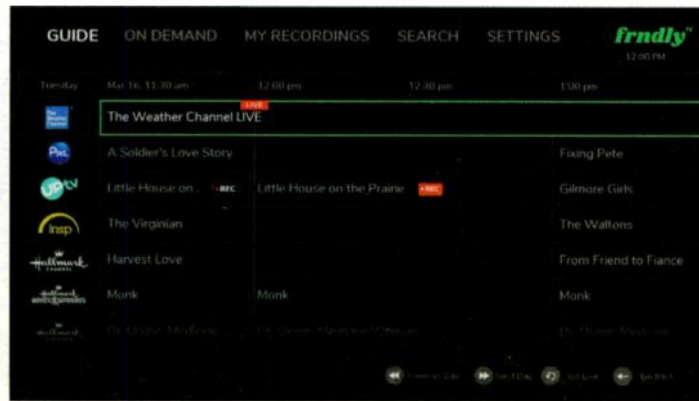
For Frndly TV, the path to profitability in the virtual multichannel video programming distributor (vMVPD) business is a combination of experience, discipline and a little bit of faith.

Launched in October 2019 by a group of former Dish Network executives led by CEO Bassil El-Khatib, Frndly TV has managed to quickly grow its subscriber base to more than 440,000, adding 200,000 customers in the fourth quarter alone. It started turning a profit in December, executives said.

Starting at \$5.99 a month, Frndly TV offers a bundle of family-friendly and inspirations networks including Hallmark Channel, Up TV, INSP, Outdoor Channel, The Weather Channel and BabyFirst. The service also has \$7.99 and \$9.99 tiers, which add cloud-based DVR recording functionality and authorize more screens.

Frndly's latest programming addition is the Dove Channel, via a deal with Cinedigm Networks.

"There could not be a more perfect fit than Dove Channel on Frndly TV," Cinedigm president Erick Opeka said. "Both were created with the mission of providing positive, family-oriented entertainment. Cinedigm is focused on delivering enthusiast audiences with content they're passionate about and our partnership with Frndly TV underscores that notion of family-safe programming."



Frndly TV has built its business around independent, family friendly channels with loyal followings, says CEO Bassil El-Khatib (below).



The channel also fits with Frndly TV's disciplined financial model and subscribers will get the Dove Channel without paying more.

Bigger vMVPDs YouTube TV, Hulu Plus Live TV, fuboTV and Dish's Sling TV have been money losers, with expensive programming costs overwhelming the consumer benefit of being a low-priced alternative to pay TV.

Frndly saw an opportunity in a different approach. "All the big players are trying to be everything to everyone," said El-Khatib, who co-founded the vMVPD with chief programming officer Michael McKenna, chief financial officer Mike McClain and chief operating officer Andy Karofsky.

"We identified that there is a very large underserved market that no one's going after," El-Khatib said. "It's that middle America market, people who are looking for that uplifting family-friendly entertainment." The way he sees it, "middle America" viewers can be found not just in the South and Midwest, but just outside most metropolitan areas, even in California and New York.

"There are a lot of independent channels that are not widely distributed but have loyal followings," El-Khatib added. "If we could provide that in a cost-effective manner, we thought people would appreciate that and it proved to be true."

Frndly TV does not offer as many channels as some other services, but its pitch is being a good value on a per-channel basis. It is operating lean and mean to stay that way, McClain said.

"Our plan is we know what our price point is," McClain said. "Our packages are designed so that we have a healthy gross margin."

Frndly hasn't raised its base price since it started.

With their industry backgrounds, including some who were involved in the launch of Sling TV (which Dish founder Charlie Ergen recently admitted the company "stumbled" with), the Frndly TV team wasn't trying to revolutionize the business, having learned what works and what doesn't.

Steve Smith, executive VP, distribution and affiliate marketing for the Outdoor Sportsman Group, said he was introduced to Frndly TV by McKenna.

"We get a lot of people calling us to try to do deals and we don't do them all. We try to make sure they have a business that's going to work," Smith said. "I've known Michael a long time, he's a smart guy, and so's Andy. We said, hey, let's take a shot, and it's been great. They've done really well."

Smith said he wasn't aware of other distributors targeting less-populated so-called B and C counties and that FrndlyTV had been doing "really, really smart" digital and social marketing.

"I don't know where the ceiling is," he said. "They haven't found it yet."

Frndly TV was originally backed by investment from friends and family members, and more recently raised money via a Series A round of financing and the sale of convertible notes.

Right now, Frndly TV's founders also handle customer service, which gives them a direct line to its audience.

The company recently started to sell advertising, inserting ads on some channels and selling some programmatically. "Other services have negative gross margins on their product and they hope to make it up with ad sales," El-Khatib said. "Ad sales is gravy for us." ●

A NOTE TO OUR READERS

To B+C Readers:

It has always been the mission of our editors to evolve at the speed of media & entertainment and that's been especially true after 2020.

Starting on April 1, we're combining our two industry magazines — *Broadcasting+Cable* and *Multichannel News* — to create a single source of

comprehensive journalism to better serve our fast-changing industry, audiences and advertisers. We're adding pages, photography and data visualization and evolving our editorial focus to provide you with deeper reporting, more analysis and a broader range of feature stories monthly.

Careful readers will not be surprised by this move given we first grouped these

brands together digitally last summer at NextTV.com to better serve growing audiences and eager advertisers, so you'll continue to find timely and in-depth digital coverage of the cable, broadcast and streaming sectors of the media and entertainment industry there.

Our robust calendar of events and special issues will not change and our three branded SmartBrief newsletters, meanwhile, will also continue to leverage our editorial expertise and proprietary

technology to curate relevant news to keep you on top of the trends and best practices that are reshaping the future of our industry.

We welcome hearing from you about our journalism, our events and newsletters. You can reach me at william.gannon@futurenet.com.



Thanks,
Bill Gannon, VP of Content & Global Editor-in-Chief



TVB EUROPE
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S U M M I T
MARCH 25-26, 2021

Technologies Shaping the Future Media Landscape

The **MediaTech 360** conference series returns in 2021 to explore the technologies and trends driving evolutionary change in today's media industry. Attendees will learn how the market's leading authorities are evolving their businesses for tomorrow's world.

The effects of 2020 for media companies will be long lasting, and permanent, and the period adds a significant footnote in the story of an industry already undergoing fundamental change. Against this remarkable backdrop, the **MediaTech 360** conference series will explore some of the industry's biggest technological and operational challenges, and the opportunities that lie within.

Topics covered include:

- 5G and advanced video distribution
- The new world of virtual production
- Remote production, and what we've learned from lockdown
- AI, machine learning and data
- The power of archive content
- The evolution of MAM systems
- Monetizing video content
- Standards and the path to IP infrastructures

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THE WATCHMAN

Senior content producer Michael Malone's look at the programming scene



The Mighty Ducks: Game Changers



By Michael Malone
michael.malone@futurenet.com
 @BCMikMalone

'Mighty Ducks' Back on the Ice On Disney Plus

The *Mighty Ducks: Game Changers* is on Disney Plus March 26. Emilio Estevez reprises his role as coach Gordon Bombay from the '90s film franchise.

Set in Minnesota, a player on a fearsome youth hockey team is cut and he and his mother, played by Lauren Graham, set out to build their own team of misfits, with an assist from coach Gordon.

Creator Steve Brill approached Estevez a couple years ago about bringing back *Mighty Ducks*. "I said, 'Well, sure, if we can capture the magic of the first films, the magic of the franchise,'" Estevez said at last month's TCA Winter Press Tour. "If we can create a cinematic experience and not just try to sort of cash

in on the nostalgia aspect of it.' And I think that's ultimately what we've done."

Brill is an executive producer.

Graham said the series reminds parents to chill out at their kids' games. "What the series is looking at is how important is winning, how wrapped up have we gotten in achievement?" she said. "I have cousins who are in this world with their kids, who saw the trailer and said that the parents didn't look bad enough."

The *Mighty Ducks* also reminds kids to just have fun on the field, court or rink. "Kids these days, they have trainers," executive producer and showrunner Josh Goldsmith said. "They specialize. They eat salads. They get flexor injuries very early in their sports careers."

Added exec producer/showrunner Cathy Yuspa, "They're mini-pros."

Showtime Crime Drama Has Mass Appeal

Season two of Boston drama *City on a Hill* starts on Showtime March 28. Kevin Bacon and Aldis Hodge star. The season centers on a federal housing project in Roxbury plagued with drug violence and a distrust in law enforcement.

Bacon directs the premiere. "When you get through a whole season, you really learn these characters pretty intimately and also the tone of the show, the look of the show, the back story of everything," Bacon said at the TCA Press Tour. "So a lot of your homework is already done."

Bacon acknowledged directing and starring is "a lot of work."

"I like to think that if I really understand a character, you can kind of throw anything at me, and I can just live in that moment as that guy," he added. "And, so, going back and forth between being behind the camera, in front of the camera, was pretty seamless for me."

Executive producer Tom Fontana shared his thoughts on plotting out a new season. "What we are trying to do is find a story that really happened in Boston in this period," he said, "and then fictionalize it so that we can incorporate our regular characters into the story." ●



City on a Hill

WATCH THIS ...



Breeders

Breeders is back on FX Monday. Martin Freeman and Daisy Haggard star as parents who don't quite have the hang of parenting. Also on Monday, *Return to Amish* is on TLC. The series tells the stories of ex-Amish as they try to establish their lives outside of the world they grew up in. Jeremiah is on the hunt for his biological family and Jethro celebrates a year of sobriety. Thursday, E! has *For Real: The Story of Reality TV*. Hosted and executive-produced by Andy Cohen, the seven-part series



John Wayne Gacy

explores celebrealty, dating, competition and extreme makeover series, and promises "shocking revelations." Also on Thursday, *John Wayne Gacy* premieres on Peacock. The docuseries marks Peacock's first venture into true crime, and looks into one of the world's most notorious serial killers. One more for Thursday: The series finale of *Superstore* on NBC. The comedy reaches 113 episodes, and America Ferrera is back for the send-off.



Superstore

Mighty Ducks: Disney Plus; City on a Hill, Showtime; Breeders: FX; John Wayne Gacy: Peacock; Superstore: NBC

ATSC 3.0™

SUMMIT

MARCH 25-26, 2021

The Business of NextGen TV

ATSC 3.0 is the revolutionary next-generation terrestrial broadcast system designed to improve the television viewing experience with enhanced audio & video quality, improved compression efficiency, broadened device reception, and Internet-like personalization & interactivity – as well as a robust conduit for a myriad of “beyond TV” data-centric applications and services.

With technical deployments of NextGenTV scaling rapidly across the country, the opportunity to define breakthrough products/services and prioritize viable go-to-market business models is now both timely and tangible; the **ATSC 3.0 Summit** will be the conversational center of it all.



KEYNOTE

Mark Aitken
President
ONE Media 3.0



KEYNOTE

John Hane
President
BitPath



KEYNOTE

Madeleine Noland
President
Advanced Television
Systems Committee



KEYNOTE

Anne Schelle
Managing Director
Pearl TV

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TECH LEADERSHIP Stars of 2021

DIVERSE FIELD OF STARS SHINES OVER TECH

B+C's 2021 Technology Leadership Award winners reflect a wide range of industry innovations



By George Winslow
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This year's Technology Leadership Award honorees, selected by the editors of *Broadcasting+Cable*, have some of the most diverse résumés in the history of these awards, with careers in broadcast TV, cable, streaming, theatrical film production, research, venture capital and public media.

For some, their work involves fundamental, cutting-edge research or the development of standards that are bringing new technologies to market. Others are using newer technologies like data analytics, cloud-based infrastructures or artificial intelligence to help traditional TV companies build new infrastructures for new digital and streaming businesses. Many of them have also pursued careers in more traditional media, where they've used their technological skills in broadcasting or content production in innovative ways that helped develop new consumer experiences and better video content.

Taken together, the honorees' stories offer a snapshot of a technological revolution that is transforming virtually every aspect of the television industry.

Many of them will speak about that tech revolution at this year's Technology Leadership Series, from March 23-26. For more on the agendas and sessions, go to technologyleadershipsummit.com. ●

Greig Fraser
Director of Photography/
Producer
Disney Plus

ONE BIG REASON why Greig Fraser is getting a Technology Leadership Award can be seen by simply firing up the Disney Plus app and watching *The Mandalorian*.

Star Wars fans have come to expect lavish special effects that transport audiences all over the universe, but creating the beautiful otherworldly landscapes found in blockbuster movies presents a serious challenge for a television series like *The Mandalorian*, which must be produced on a much more limited budget.

Working with teams at Industrial Light & Magic, the visual-effects company that creates the stunning imagery for the *Star Wars* franchise, Fraser came up with a much less costly solution to the problem, a new production system dubbed "The Volume."

The idea originated in 2015 during the production of theatrical film *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*. That film used a large LED (light-emitting diode) wall, which could display different backgrounds to shoot a number of scenes.

By the time shooting started on season one of *The Mandalorian* in 2018, improvements in LED walls, processing power and upgrades to Epic Games's Unreal Engine 4 allowed producers to use a similar system to create spectacular visuals without leaving a Los Angeles warehouse.

"We could create a background on the wall with the 3D gaming engine that a camera could shoot, and create realistic images," Fraser explained. "It means you never have to build a set

again. You just project it on a wall and it becomes real."

The effort earned Fraser and Baz Idoine a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Cinematography for a Single-Camera Series (Half-Hour) in 2020. But Fraser believes the potential goes far beyond beautiful images in *The Mandalorian* and science-fiction projects that rely heavily on special effects. "It started in science fiction and *Star Wars*, but I think it will become a mainstream drama based solution," Fraser said.

The Volume also cuts costs and simplifies the production process, which is often limited by weather, available light, logistics and other factors, he said. That means producers can pay more attention to storytelling, as opposed to trying to quickly shoot a scene during the beautiful but fleeting dawn or dusk light.

"I think it is a milestone, a turning point in filmmaking that will allow directors to come up with innovative ways to tell stories," he said.

Fraser's work with ILM to create *The Volume* is the most recent highlight from an award-winning career as a director of photography, producer and cinematographer. He has worked on dozens of films, including *Zero Dark Thirty*, *Lion*, *Rogue One* and such upcoming films as *The Batman*, where *The Volume* will be used.

Throughout his career, Fraser has always tried to use technology in ways that would help directors tell better stories.

"Everyone thinks that filmmaking always involves the perfect scenario," Fraser said. "The sky is always blue and everything is perfect. But the reality is very different. Nature is very beautiful, but it can also be cruel. So my goal for filmmaking is to remove as many of the hindrances to filmmaking as possible so that technology helps, not hinders, the director." ●

“Everyone thinks that filmmaking always involves the perfect scenario. ... But the reality is very different.”

William T. Hayes
Director of Engineering
& Technology
Iowa Public Television

LIKE MANY TECHNOLOGY Leadership Award winners over the years, William Hayes got an early start in broadcasting, building an AM radio station at his high school with a few classmates. "We played music during lunch hour but the reality of it was that we wanted to be DJs, so we built a radio station to do that," he said.

Hayes pursued his dream of being a disc jockey while attending Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, where his tech skills helped him to get work fixing things and as a DJ at the college radio station.

"But I soon found that jocks get fired a lot," Hayes recalled with a laugh. So, in the late 1970s, he decided to follow the advice of a colleague who praised his tech skills.

"He said I ought to become an engineer," he said. "You still get to work in a fun business but you don't get fired anywhere as much."

Hayes made the switch to TV when

he was hired in 1982 by Mauna Kea Broadcasting to construct the first full-powered UHF TV station in the Hawaiian islands. From there, he went on to a successful career in commercial broadcasting in the 1980s and 1990s, holding the top engineering jobs at a number of stations before taking his current job at Iowa PBS in 1999.

At the nine-station Iowa PBS network, Hayes and his tech teams have been involved in a number of innovative projects. These include: a major digital TV transition with nine transmitter sites; acting as the

host of an annual summit on the DTV transition; launching an all-HD facility in 2007, when many stations were still standard-definition; and, most recently,

overseeing an innovative approach to installing a new automation system during a pandemic lockdown.

Much of this illustrates the kind of innovation often found at public broadcasters that operate on limited budgets. "We don't have a lot of money, but people are very mission-driven and good at finding ways to think outside the box to get things done," he said.

Hayes's career also illustrates the kind of industry-wide collaboration that has characterized many Technology Leadership Award winners. Early in his career, Hayes saw the virtues of collaboration when he got help building his first TV station in Hawaii from colleagues like Doug Lung, another 2021 Technology Leadership Award winner, and the Harold Ennis books he'd gotten from the Society of Broadcast Engineers (SBE).

Following that experience, he began to work closely with a number of major organizations, including the SBE; the IEEE Broadcast Technology Society, where he is a past president; and the Society of Motion Pictures and Television Engineers (SMPTE). ●

“People are very mission-driven and good at finding ways to think outside the box.”

Cindy Hutter Cavell
VP
Cavell, Mertz and Associates

EARLY IN HER career, in 1981, Cindy Hutter Cavell remembers getting a call from her boss at ABC News telling her that she needed to be at Kennedy Airport the next afternoon, because they were flying her to Kathmandu, Nepal, where she would be building a series of microwave transmitters that ABC and Canada's CBC would use to air the climbing of Mount Everest.

That kind of engineering work, to capture amazing images from all over the world, highlights the kind of innovation that broadcast engineers have displayed for decades. It's also an early example of the innovative work that has earned Hutter Cavell a place in the 2021 class of Technology Leadership Award winners.

Hutter Cavell got an early start in technology, learning how to solder at the age of 10 and hosting a daily classical music program at her high-school radio station.

After getting a journalism degree at the University of Kansas in 1977, she went to work in local TV before joining ABC News. Besides her adventures at Everest, her 15-year stint at ABC News saw her working on numerous presidential trips, three Olympics and Operation Desert Storm, where she was the on-site technical manager in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for U.S. Army Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf's briefings in 1991.

In 1993, Hutter Cavell returned to local broadcast, heading up engineering at a number of differ-

ent stations being acquired by Argyle Television. As one of very few women to head a local station's engineering staff, she did innovative work rebuilding a number of facilities, but her proudest memories come from training and working with local engineers. "I wanted to return to local TV because I wanted to grow operations and grow people," she recalled.

After overseeing a digital upgrade at a Fox Sports Net facility in Houston and then

working for Digital Systems Technol-

ogy, she was hired in 2004 by Sprint Nextel as director of engineering to oversee the \$700 million 2-GHz relocation.

This work had an important long-term impact on the industry because it

allowed stations to move to newer digital microwaves and laid the groundwork for moving to IP microwave.

She then joined Cavell, Mertz and has since been involved in a number of innovative projects, including building a series of microwave transmitters capable of transporting data from Chicago to New York faster than a fiber-optic network. Cindy and her husband, Garrison Cavell, have also been very active in working with the National Association of Broadcasters to train the next generation of engineers.

"Media companies are complaining that they can't find engineers," Hutter Cavell said. "My response is to say, 'You need to put your money where your mouth is.' If you have a chief engineer who is over 60, you had better start now training someone for that role." ●



“I wanted to return to local TV because I wanted to grow operations and grow people.”



Brett Jenkins
Executive VP/Chief
Technology Officer
Nexstar Media Group

WHEN BRETT JENKINS earned his bachelor of science in electrical engineering at the University of Massachusetts in 1992, he remembers becoming fascinated with digital broadcasting and taking a job at Comark, a manufacturer of transmission technologies.

"I thought digital broadcasting was the coolest thing ever," Jenkins recalled. "It was television and it was digital and we could do things with digital technologies you couldn't do before."

One of his first tasks at Comark was working on digital modulators and getting digital broadcasts to work, which led to a series of jobs at vendors that were developing cutting-edge technologies for digital broadcasting, including Thales and Thomson. Jenkins was the lead U.S. engineer in a global team developing digital adaptive pre-correction technology that earned Thales a technical Emmy in 2003.

After getting an MBA in 2005 from the Questrom School of Business at Boston University, Jenkins moved to the broadcasting side of the business, taking a job with Ion Media in 2007 as director of technology strategy. "I wanted to move from not just developing technology to working at broadcasters on ways to connect technology to the business success of broadcasting," he said. "That is still really my passion today."

Jenkins was promoted to VP of technology at Ion in 2009 and then took the top engineering jobs at Lin Media in 2011 and Media General in 2014. After Nexstar acquired Media

General, Jenkins was named executive VP and chief technology officer of Nexstar in 2017.

At Nexstar, the nation's largest broadcaster, Jenkins has been working on a number of innovative technologies, including work on new standards for advanced advertising, finding better ways to produce local news and deployments of the next generation broadcast standard ATSC 3.0.



"We launched ATSC 3.0 in 12 markets in 2020 and another 20 markets might launch this year," he explained, adding that by the end of the 2021 Nexstar stations broadcasting in ATSC 3.0 will reach about one-third of the country.

Figuring out new business models for next-generation broadcasting is still a work in progress, but Jenkins sees opportunities in two major areas: first, using ATSC 3.0 to improve stations' core businesses with higher quality video and interactivity; and second, developing new businesses.

These potential businesses include broadcasting to vehicles and developing new customers who would use the stations' ability to broadcast data.

Jenkins has also been playing a major role in the development of the Television Interface Practices (TIP) standards that will reduce the complexity of buying local TV advertising and potentially boost ad revenues by automating the process. As these technologies are deployed in 2021 and beyond, they will help broadcasters compete much more effectively with digital outlets like Google and Facebook by making it much easier for advertisers to buy local media. "What always really excites me is finding technologies and using technologies to make the business perform better," he said. ●

“What always really excites me is finding technologies... to make the business perform better.”

Yvette Kanouff
Partner and CTO
JC2 Ventures

AS THE INDUSTRY faces an unprecedented period of technological change, Yvette Kanouff lands on the 2021 list of Technology Leadership Award honorees for a long career working with transformative technologies, like video-on-demand, that changed the way people access and enjoy video.

After earning a master's degree in mathematics at the University of Central Florida and working in the area of pattern recognition, Kanouff started her pioneering career in digital technologies in 1994 as director of interactive television at Time Warner Cable's Full Service Network. Here, she worked on a host of innovations, including interactive television, on-demand television, two-way networks and delivery of digital content.

In 1997, she moved to SeaChange International, where she played a central role in bringing early on-demand technologies to market. "After the Full Service Network was shut down, I wanted to productize those technologies and bring a successful VOD product to market," she said. That meant she had to not only prove the technology would work but show it had a viable business model. "The concept of replacing a Blockbuster home-video store with on-demand video was just inconceivable."

Between 2012 and 2014, Kanouff held the top tech job at Cablevision Systems, where she pioneered such new technologies as the deployment of the first cloud-based DVR. She then joined Cisco Systems, heading up their video unit in 2014 and eventually taking charge of their entire service provider business, overseeing 6,000 employees.

In 2019, she joined the venture capital world in her current role at JC2, which was founded by her former boss at Cisco, John Chambers.

Over the years, her technical skills have earned Kanouff a host of major awards, including the NCTA Vanguard Award for Engineering and Technology and a 2020 Lifetime Achievement Award in Technology and Engineering from the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

In the venture world, Kanouff is working with about 20 startups at JC2. They operate in a number of areas that could be important for the future of

“The concept of replacing a Blockbuster home-video store with on-demand video was just inconceivable.”

the pay TV, telco, television and entertainment sectors in such areas as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, automation and cybersecurity. She also remains active in a number of industry organizations,

including the Society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers/International Society of Broadband Engineers, where she is vice chairman of the SCTE Foundation. She has also been a longtime advocate of diversity in the tech sector.

"When I joined the industry, I was very commonly the only woman in the room," Kanouff said. "I was very lucky to have so many wonderful mentors who were sponsors of my career. So I've been very active in trying to help both minorities and women, and it is nice to see that this is an issue that is coming front and center." ●



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Jaya Kolhatkar
Executive VP of Data
Walt Disney Direct-to-Consumer & International

THE RISE OF streaming video and direct-to-consumer streaming services has made data analytics a particularly hot topic, as major players like The Walt Disney Co. launch streaming services around the world.

The industry's pivot to DTC also highlights the growing importance of innovative work by experts in data analytics like Jaya Kolhatkar, the head of data analytics at Disney's DTC operations. Her innovative work in data technologies at Hulu helped boost subscriber numbers to 39.4 million in the first quarter of 2021, up from 17 million in 2017, and created insights into consumer habits that helped Hulu's sales team develop new ad products.

Kolhatkar said she became fascinated with data and statistics while in college, which led to an MBA from Villanova University in 1987. But she really saw the power of data analytics after graduation, when she took a job with an insurance agency that did a lot of direct marketing.

"A lot of the marketing research I'd done before was less directly related to the day-to-day success of a company, but here I was using data analytics to make direct marketing more efficient and less costly," she recalled. "It was a great introduction how important leveraging data can be to a company and showed that if done well it can really be a competitive advantage."

From there, she had a series of jobs in data analytics in financial services before working as director of fraud and payments at Amazon between 1999 and 2003. There, she worked on the launch of the very successful Amazon Visa card.

As her career progressed, Kolhatkar also became more involved in not just

data analytics, but the technology infrastructure for handling that data. Between 2007 and 2011, for example, she worked with a team of engineers at eBay to develop better ways to leverage the data from their three main businesses.

Using that experience, she and some friends at eBay launched a startup in 2011 that developed a tech platform for data analytics. It was acquired in 2013 by Walmart, where she worked until 2018, when she joined Hulu.



Hulu had long been doing innovative work in data analytics but Kolhatkar was the first executive to oversee all those efforts. One of her early tasks was to harmonize the data and use it to help boost

revenue, which led to a number of successful new products and efforts.

In addition to using data analytics to refine new user interfaces, those insights were also applied to the development of new ad products. For example, Hulu's sales teams capitalized on the popularity of binge viewing by developing ad strategies for it. After a viewer had watched a certain number of episodes, they would see an announcement that a single advertiser was sponsoring the episode, which would otherwise be ad-free.

"We also found that people were pausing a lot," Kolhatkar explained. Based on that insight, the sales team sold ad images that would appear on the screen when the video was paused.

Last summer, Kolhatkar was promoted to her current role, heading up data teams for Disney's direct to consumer services like Disney Plus, Hulu and ESPN Plus so that the company can leverage data insights across all the services.

"We are not only looking at brand new trends from all three services but also figuring out what we can learn from the different data infrastructures," she said. ●

“Here I was using data analytics to make direct marketing more efficient and less costly.”

Stephanie Mitchko-Beale
Executive VP & Chief Technology Officer
Charter Communications

AS THE TOP TECHNOLOGIST at Charter Communications, Stephanie Mitchko-Beale has long been an innovator, having worked on early deployments of broadband networks, advanced advertising, cloud-based DVRs and interactive television.

During her 15-year stint at Cablevision Systems, she won an Emmy Award for Best Interactive Television Platform as well as two Technical Emmys. Since joining Charter in 2019, she's been overseeing tech teams building faster, more reliable networks as part of cable's 10G initiative that will ultimately produce broadband speeds of 10GB.

This year, Mitchko-Beale isn't just being honored for a long history of tech innovation. She is receiving B+C's first award for Technology Leadership in Building Diverse Tech Teams for promoting diversity in the industry.

Mitchko-Beale's father was an engineer, and she grew up in a family where her love of math and science was encouraged as she learned to take apart radios and TVs. "I got my father's voracious curiosity in learning how things work," she recalled.

Studying for her engineering degree at New York University's Polytechnic School of Engineering in 1987, she was one of the few women in the program. Even today, Mitchko-Beale is the rare woman serving as top technologist at a large corporation like Charter, which had \$48.1 billion in revenue in 2020.

While Mitchko-Beale is unusual in a top tech position, she stressed that "the diversity and inclusion conversation isn't just about women. Having men and women of all different backgrounds, different sexes and different ethnicities being brought together for problem solving and innovation is extremely valuable."

She also highlighted the importance of inclusion: "You not only need different people in your organization, they have to be included and brought to the table if you want to see the benefits of that diversity." A variety of research studies have found that companies with more diverse employees perform better as businesses.

Such efforts are particularly important in a period of rapid technological change. "If you have a group of people who adapt and respond in the same way to issues, you don't get the benefit of having a wider discussion," she said. "But when you bring diversity into the picture and include people, you have this flow of ideas that helps you respond better and faster to change."

In addition to mentoring and working with industry organizations, Mitchko-Beale stressed that simply talking about the subject is important.

"I talk about it to my staff in staff meetings," she said. "Are you looking at diverse slates when you are hiring people? Are you making sure we are thinking about minority owned business? Are you creating an inclusive environment?"

She also stressed that the industry needs to encourage younger people to get involved with science, technology, engineering and math at an early age.

Likewise, the industry needs to highlight the very interesting, innovative work that companies like Charter are doing, she said.

"When most people think about technology they think about the tech giants, Google, Twitter, Amazon, doing cool tech things and that cable is just old cable," Mitchko-Beale said. "In fact we are doing very interesting innovative work in things like data science, artificial intelligence, streaming media, next-generation broadband networks, mobile phone technologies and app development." ●



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Barbara Lange
Executive Director
Society of Motion Picture
& Television Engineers
(SMPTE)

IN RECENT YEARS, rapid technological change has highlighted the importance of standards in the rollout and deployment of new services and businesses. Streaming services, for example, would struggle to efficiently deliver content if there were no standardized formats for digital files and compression.

That imperative has done more than make the work of venerable industry organizations like SMPTE and its executive director, Barbara Lange, more

important than ever. It has also required significant changes in the operations of SMPTE, which was founded in 1906 in the early years of the theatrical film industry.

"As the industry changes and the technology changes, we've also had to adapt," said Lange, who is receiving a Technology Leadership Award for her work in helping SMPTE support the industry with new standards, training and information so companies can navigate a rapidly changing business and technology landscape.

Lange arrived at SMPTE in 2011 with a resume that included work in scholarly publishing and at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), the world's largest technical professional organization. "When I arrived at SMPTE many of the standards were around hardware and cables coming into the hardware," she recalled. "But that has quickly transitioned to a world-based software so that most of our standards are now software oriented."

In the last decade, SMPTE's members and the volunteers serving on its standards committees have produced over 200 new tech standards, including on work crucial to the industry's pivot towards streaming and digital media in such aspects as the Interoperable Master Format (IMF), High Dynamic Range

(HDR) and video-over-IP.

"We wouldn't be where we are in not for the fantastic work of our staff, our dedicated board members and our volunteers," said Lange, who has also spearheaded a number of operational changes to help those volunteers create new standards.

In the last decade, for example, SMPTE made much more information available to members on its website; it began offering virtual education in 2013; it has adopted a host of new digital technologies for collaboration on standards work and in 2020 it provided educational

services to over 10,000 people.

Prior to the pandemic, that also helped boost membership by 30%. In the last year, those digital platforms expanded SMPTE's

international reach, with the number of countries represented at the SMPTE 2020 virtual event growing 133% over 2019.

Looking forward, SMPTE will continue putting more focus on the newer technologies the industry is embracing, Lange said. "The most important thing right now is media in the cloud and how we can enable interoperability," she said.

"This is a 105-year-old organization and the work we do is critically important to the industry," she noted. "We want to continue to be the unbiased platform where the industry can come and debate the technologies it needs." ●



“As the industry changes and the technology changes, we’ve also had to adapt.”

Doug Lung
VP Broadcast Technology
NBC/Telemundo Stations

DOUG LUNG IS the rare technologist who has not only made a significant impact on the TV industry, helping build the technical infrastructure of the Telemundo station group. He is also an influential tech writer whose columns have educated two generations of engineers on a host of new technologies in the pages of TV Tech and other publications.

Lung's passion for finding innovative ways to use broadcasting technologies and his willingness to help others advance those technologies, began early.

"I must have RF [radio frequency] technologies in my blood," Lung quipped, noting that he began building radios in the late 1950s, got his ham radio license at the age of 12 and was teaching a class on amateur radio in the late 1960s while still in high school. One of his students, a chief engineer at a local radio station, was so impressed, he hired him to for an evening shift at the radio station.

After working in the 1970s and early '80s in radio, local cable TV, a global production center and eventually at TV station KSCI Los Angeles, Lung made an indelible mark on the broadcasting business by expanding the reach of Spanish-language television.

In 1985, Lung joined a group of four colleagues that bought KSCI and successfully relaunched it as L.A.'s second Spanish-language station. Fueled by that success, the group then acquired and built a number of other stations that would

become the Telemundo station group. Lung headed up the tech and engineering operations at these Telemundo stations until the Spanish-language broadcaster was acquired by NBC in 2002.

In addition to his important work advancing the success of Spanish-language broadcasting in the U.S. via his work at the Telemundo stations, Lung has also been one of the most influential writers about broadcast technology. In

recent decades, he's

written nearly 300

columns for TV

Tech, B+C's

sister

publication,

and has been

a contributor

to journals

put

out by

organizations

like the IEEE

Broadcast

Technology Society,

where he has focused

on open source software and

innovative hardware.

"Writing the column for TV Tech has been a great opportunity because it forced me to learn about new technologies and provided me with invaluable feedback," he said.

Lung noted that NBCUniversal has been very supportive of that work, allowing him to discuss new technologies as long as he stresses that his comments are his own views and not those of the company.

Lung stayed on after the acquisition of Telemundo by NBC and is currently responsible for RF and transmission technologies at NBCUniversal's owned stations.

Other career highlights include leading the DTV transition at the station group, compiling tech information for his transmitter.com website and working with a team of engineers to get New York's TV stations back on the air after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. ●



“I must have RF [radio frequency] technologies in my blood.”

Phil McKinney President and CEO CableLabs

OVER THE LAST year, the pandemic highlighted the importance of the CableLabs research into creating fast, reliable internet connections for home schooling and remote work, with a host of newer technologies on the horizon that could have an even bigger impact over the next decade.

CableLabs president and CEO Phil McKinney came to the organization with a well established reputation for discussing innovation on his podcast and radio show and in his books and for a long career in technology dating back to the early 1980s. His resume includes the launch of more than a dozen tech start-ups and senior tech roles at Teligent, Computer Sciences Corp. and Hewlett Packard.

As VP and chief technology officer of Hewlett Packard's Personal Systems Group until 2011, McKinney oversaw an operation with \$40 billion in annual revenue; set up HP's successful and widely copied Innovation Program Office to incubate and launch new products and services; and built tech teams that were listed as among the 50 most innovative by *Fast Company* and *Bloomberg Businessweek* in three different years. He also launched the Hacking Autism Foundation that he still runs.

This background in software, IT, tech startups and Silicon Valley convinced the cable industry to hire him to head CableLabs, the industry's tech consortium, in 2012. At that time, cable faced increased competition from tech giants such as Google, Facebook and Amazon, and MSOs were responding by

placing more emphasis on IP networks, streaming, software and other widely used Silicon Valley technologies.

"One notable part of that pivot we've made at CableLabs," McKinney said, "has been to take a longer-range view, not focusing on technologies that are one to three years from coming to market but to focus on three to eight years. We wanted to take a longer view and make bigger bets around longer, larger products."

That has gotten CableLabs involved in a number of cutting-edge technologies, including much-faster and more reliable broadband services, artificial intelligence, new holographic lightroom imaging displays and the convergence of wireless and wired networks that will help operators deliver content and new services more seamlessly into the home.

Such efforts could have a major impact on the overall tech landscape in the 2020s and beyond. The development of high-speed internet technologies over cable via the DOCSIS standard at CableLabs in the 1990s and 2000s helped touch off a wave of tech innovation in the early 21st century, McKinney said, as

Google, Facebook, Amazon, Netflix and others built new digital services

on top of the high-speed internet platform being deployed by the cable industry.

Today, McKinney believes cable's 10G initiative, which would enable speeds of 10 gigabits per second, will have a similar

impact. "As we develop 10G, you are going to see some very interesting technologies built on top of 5GB and 10GB networks," he said. "We are investing and working on creating an amazing platform for others to innovate on top of." ●



“We wanted to take a longer view and make bigger bets around longer, larger products.”

Phil Wiser Executive VP Chief Technology Officer ViacomCBS

A PRIME EXAMPLE of how executives from the streaming and digital worlds are helping major media companies build new streaming and direct to consumer businesses can be found in ViacomCBS's top technologist, Phil Wiser.

Early in his career, Wiser was the co-founder and chief technology officer of

Liquid Audio, which developed underlying technologies for online music. In 2001, he moved to Sony Music, where he formed the Digital Business

Group as the chief digital and technology officer, and convinced the company to ink a landmark deal with iTunes that would revolutionize the music business.

"At Liquid Audio, we had to create the fundamental technologies to package and distribute media over the Internet," he recalled. "Then at Sony I had a great opportunity to help them reinvent their business around digital at a time when we were starting a massive disruption of the music industry."

After leaving Sony in 2006, Wiser co-founded the pioneering video streaming service Sezmi that offered the first internet cable bundle of channels and broadcast stations, an effort that also required new technologies. "We generated over 1,000 patents that really foreshadowed what is happening in the market today," he said.

After a stint as the first CTO at Hearst between 2012 and 2018, Wiser then took the top tech job at CBS, assuming his current role when Viacom and CBS merged.

As ViacomCBS works to accelerate what were already very extensive streaming efforts with the launch of Paramount Plus this month, Wiser said: "We are working to transform our entire media operating model. That is a real disruption of everything from

the way we produce our content to the way we process and distribute the content."

A central part of that effort is a shift to cloud-based technologies that will enable the use of newer automation systems, machine learning and artificial intelligence to improve operations, Wiser said.

In December of 2020, ViacomCBS said it would work with Amazon Web Services to move operations for its entire broadcast footprint, which spans 425 linear television channels and 40 global data and media centers, to the cloud.

Looking forward, Wiser said, the creation of a new technical infrastructure will provide ViacomCBS with much greater flexibility to quickly launch new services and expand

internationally, which is crucial for streaming media business models. "Paramount Plus was available in 20 markets at launch internationally," he said.

Wiser also believes the new infrastructure will help deliver higher-quality content, such as high dynamic range (HDR) video, and give artists new outlets for their creativity.

"Throughout my career I've always been focused on artists," he said "So I'm particularly proud that [these tech efforts] are giving writers and creators new opportunities" to create high-quality productions that can be delivered to consumers in new ways. ●

“We are working to transform our entire media operating model.”



A Peek Inside '60 Minutes'

Longtime producer Ira Rosen shares about working closely with Mike Wallace



By Michael Malone
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Ira Rosen has authored *Ticking Clock: Behind the Scenes at 60 Minutes*, based on the almost 25 years he spent as a producer at the famed newsmag. Rosen worked closely with Mike Wallace, whom he depicts as alternately a brilliant reporter and a bully. After he shifted to ABC News, Rosen worked alongside Mike's son, Chris Wallace.

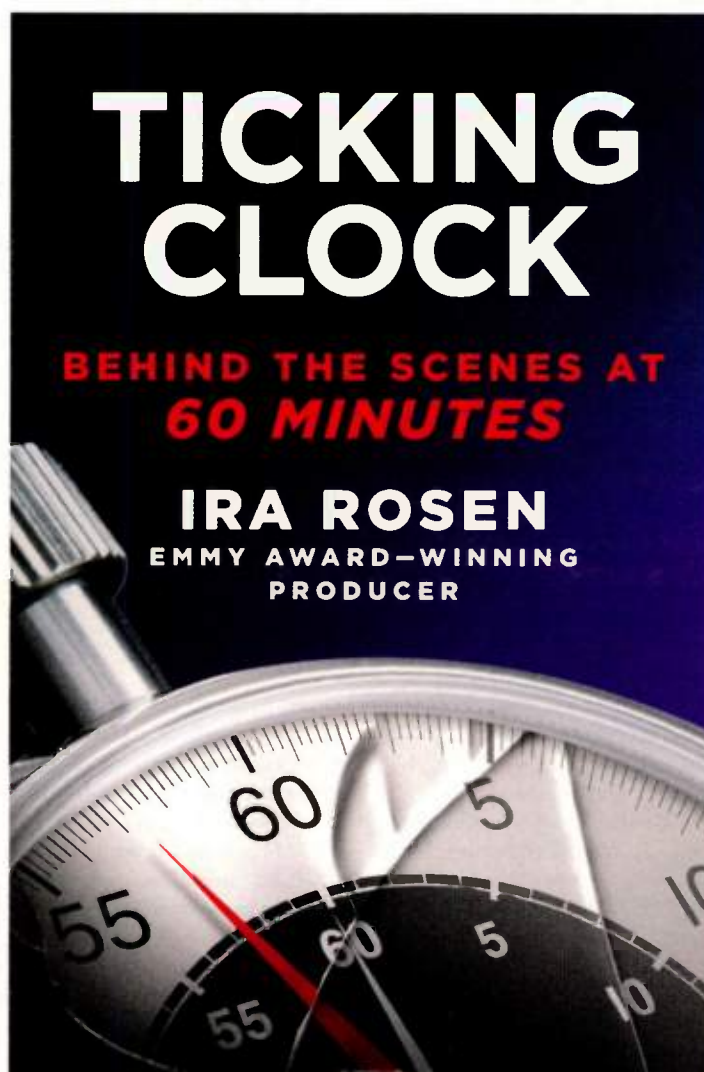
Rosen ended up back at 60 Minutes, and retired in 2019. He likened being a 60 Minutes producer to being Superman. "You have these superpowers to right the wrongs of society," he said. Retiring has been a bit of a comedown. "Now I'm back to being Clark Kent," he quipped.

Rosen shared about his work at 60 Minutes, cable news and President Donald Trump's future on TV. An edited transcript follows.

B+C: Jeff Fager wrote 50 Years of 60 Minutes a few years ago. What else is there to say about the show?

Ira Rosen: A lot of people don't realize that the show was always constructed as a producer's show. [Creator] Don Hewitt hired the best producers in the business. He believed in storytelling. Don's book was *Tell Me a Story*, which was kind of his mantra for doing 60 Minutes.

Most of the correspondents have written memoirs, but you rarely have heard from the producers. I tried to give it a producer's perspective.



B+C: Do you have a most memorable story at 60 Minutes?

IR: Probably the story I did with Bill Whitaker on the opioid epidemic ["The Whistleblower," 2017]. It was a series of stories. Whitaker was the last correspondent I worked with and in many ways he was probably the best — incredibly smart, a great interviewer. He's with you in the trenches; he'll spend hours and hours working on scripts.

The story we did was about how Congress neutered the powers of the DEA at the height of the opioid epidemic, and took away their powers to enforce against major corporations. We focused on Congressman [Tom] Marino, who led the legislation that took the powers of the DEA away.

Marino was scheduled to be President Trump's new drug czar. Within two days of us doing the story, Trump rescinded the offer.

It was a joint project with The Washington Post. It was probably the most

Longtime 60 Minutes producer Ira Rosen tells the story of the influential newsmagazine from a producer's standpoint in *Ticking Clock*.



A lot of people don't realize that the show was always constructed as a producer's show.

award-winning series in the history of 60 Minutes.

B+C: What do you think of cable news?

IR: I think they're pandering too much to a particular type of audience. I understand it's a very segmented reach — either you go for one side of the aisle or the other. I'd like to see them a little bit more even-handed. What happens is, they end up reaching a little bit more to figure out what their particular audience wants and then a lot of times facts get distorted. On both sides of the aisle.

B+C: Do you see journalists today that make you think of Mike Wallace?

IR: Scott Pelley, Bill Whitaker and Lesley Stahl. They're great interviewers. They've studied Mike and they've learned from Mike, the good and the bad.

Mike's genius was, he could look at a total stranger and know exactly what button to push to drive them crazy. It was an art form in some ways. He would bond with them instantly. It would be like he was reading their aura or something, and knew how to get the most out of them.

I think his work is going to be studied years from now in journalism school.

B+C: Anybody outside of 60 Minutes that reminds you of Mike?

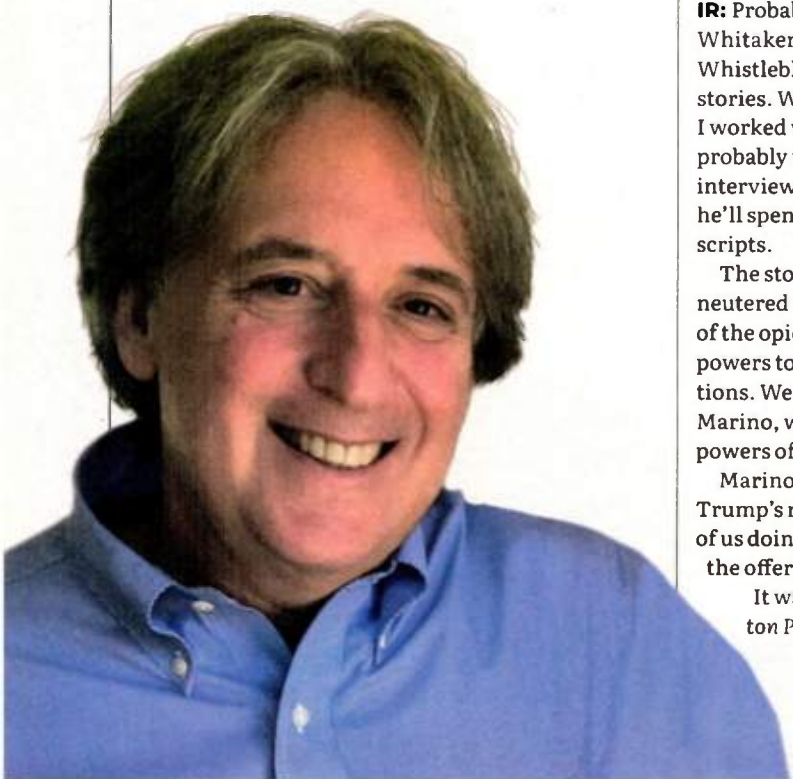
IR: Chris Wallace [anchor of Fox News Sunday]. I worked with Chris at ABC and never once in the entire time I worked with him, which was about 13 years, did he ever ask me, what would my father do? He always figured out his own path and his own way of doing things.

He's probably the best interviewer on TV aside from the group at 60 Minutes.

B+C: Where do you see President Trump in terms of TV? Will he land on a cable net or launch his own venture?

IR: His focus right now is getting rid of his legal troubles. Once that is removed, I think he absolutely is going to run his own cable outfit, maybe have his own show.

He has a lot of businesses that he was away from for four years: he has to do the due diligence about the state of those businesses. Once he works out his legal and business status, you're definitely going to see him back on television in some way. ●



TECH LEADERSHIP Summit 2021

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New Tech Strategies for New Businesses

This year's Summit comes at a pivotal point in the history of television. As companies work to launch new streaming services and respond to consumer demands for more content on more devices, they are discovering that traditional TV technologies lack the flexibility and speed to market needed for success in the era of digital media. If they want to thrive and capitalize on new business opportunities like over-the-top video, which PwC expects will be an \$87 billion global business in 2024, they have to find new ways of doing things.



KEYNOTE

Brett Jenkins
EVP CTO
Nexstar Media Group



Barbara Lange
Executive Director
SMPTE



Zach Toback
Vice President, News and
Non-Fiction Production &
Studio Operations
Walt Disney Television /
ABC News



Sudheer Sirivara
Senior Vice President,
Engineering
Discovery, Inc.



KEYNOTE

Phil Wiser
Executive Vice President
and Global Chief
Technology Officer
ViacomCBS

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Snow Falls on Graceland

Memphis stations hustle to cover severe weather



By Michael Malone
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[@BCMikMalone](https://twitter.com/BCMikMalone)

While much of Memphis, Tennessee, was shut in during the mid-February snowstorm, the news crews were out and about, covering this once-in-a-generation event.

“We knew it was going to be bad,” said Jonathan Mitchell, VP and general manager of WMC. Putting 12 crews in hotel rooms “was not a cheap venture, but it was the right thing to do. We were kind of everywhere.”

Six to 10 inches fell across the market. Long-range freezing temperatures kept Memphis in lockdown and the city’s water supply was impaired.

“This part of the country is not accustomed to that,” Ron Walter, WREG VP/general manager, said. “It was crippling and dangerous and beautiful all at once.”

Nexstar Media Group owns CBS affiliate WREG. Gray Television holds NBC outlet WMC. Apollo Global Management has Fox station WHBQ and Tegna owns ABC affiliate WATN and The CW-aligned WLMT.

Comcast is the dominant pay TV operator in DMA No. 51.

Walter has spent a stunning 34 years at WREG. It is a local news powerhouse, facing stiff competition from WMC and WHBQ, with WATN playing catch-up. “As people search for a trusted source of news in their community, more people have turned to us than before,” said Rick Rogala, WATN-WLMT president/general manager.

WREG had the top household Nielsen score at 6 a.m. in January, and WHBQ was tops in 25-54. WREG won a tight 5 p.m. households race and 25-54, and won 6 p.m.

Manning the anchor desk at Memphis CBS affiliate WREG (from l.): Stephanie Scurlock, Symone Woolridge and Greg Hurst.

households, tying with WMC in 25-54.

At 10 p.m., WREG had an 8.3 household rating and 2.9 in the demo. WHBQ did a 4.1 and a 1.8, WMC a 4.1 and 1.5 and WATN a 1.2 and 0.5.

The stations are hustling to get ahead. WREG unveiled a new set in October, which Walter said is “modern, digital and like a network’s.” Next up is the newsroom.

Mitchell arrived at WMC in September 2017 after a stint as VP of news at KNTV San Francisco. The station has gone from 33 hours of news a week to 47 during his time in the market.

Rogala arrived late in 2019. WATN produced a digital town hall on race called “Uncomfortable Conversations.” “It was ground-breaking,” said Rogala. “We asked, what are the possible solutions to these questions?”

Another one on vaccines was called “Candid Conversations.” Both ran on-air.

Stations Change Owners

Memphis has seen substantial ownership changes among its stations. Apollo acquired the Cox Media Group stations, including WHBQ, late in 2019. Late in 2018, Nexstar grabbed WREG and had to sell WATN-WLMT in 2019, with Tegna acquiring. In 2018, Gray and Raycom merged, giving WMC a new owner.

The stations are looking forward to life after pandemic. WREG’s Saturday show *Informed Sources* became *The Coronavirus Alert Health Check* last year. “We modified it to reflect what is going on in the community,” said Walter, “and sometimes in the nation.”

WMC aired school lessons on a subchannel for students stuck at home last year. When students in need got laptops and internet access, and did not need televised lessons, the station raised \$350,000 for headsets.

WMC’s 3 p.m. show *Bluff City Life* is on hiatus, with news filling in. “Fingers crossed, we hope to come back in the fall,” said Mitchell.

WATN-WLMT has partnered with Heal the Hood Foundation of Memphis to build the Hero Empowerment Center in the city.

Memphis is diverse, with a rich history, and lots of nightlife on Beale Street and beyond. Said Mitchell, “It’s one of those cities that really has a soul.” ●

WMC PRODUCES COLLEGE GAMES FOR ESPN PLUS

JONATHAN MITCHELL, VP and general manager of WMC, turned up in Memphis with sports production in his background, having led a team that built a local sports network on a diginet years ago when he was the news

director at KHQ Spokane, Washington. He worked out a partnership with the University of Memphis to produce the university’s sports games for ESPN Plus. The venture began in December with men’s and women’s basketball,

and has moved on to soccer and volleyball. Baseball and softball games happen this spring.

Mitchell described the sports broadcasts as “network-quality.”

The mission is off to a solid start. “It’s been a really neat project, especially in challenging times,” he said.



When COVID issues subside, the enterprise will provide production experience to college students who may end up pursuing a career in local television. “Hopefully it develops a pipeline, not only for WMC, but for [parent] Gray Television as a whole,” Mitchell said. “We’re always looking for talent.” — MM

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Beachfront Brings Systems Together to Make Linear Ads Programmatic

Works with SeaChange, Canoe to generate scale



By Jon Lafayette
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@jlafayette

Addressable advertising is coming to linear TV slowly because it's hard to do, especially within the cable environment.

Putting relevant commercials in front of the right viewers requires getting legacy insertion equipment and set-top boxes to communicate with newfangled ad-management platforms. And if you want to do it programmatically — the way an increasing amount of ad dollars are coming into the market — a lot has to happen fast. That's not easy to do, either.

That's where Beachfront Media is staking its claim. The industry is clamoring for more inventory to be addressable and for that inventory to be available however buyers and clients want to transact.

While lots of companies jump into connected TV because it is growing fast and the digital architecture lends itself to addressability, Beachfront sees opportunity in the still-large number of cable subscribers and the fact that linear continues to draw the majority of ad spending.

Even if cord-cutting continues, "there's going to be 20 to 30 million set-top boxes in homes for the foreseeable future," Beachfront CEO Chris Maccaro said. "Building that interactivity is going to be important for at least the next decade."

Spotted Need For Enablement

Beachfront started out in the supply-side platform business but has been pivoting from competing against larger ad networks into providing enablement technology.

"We're a technology company, not a sales company," Maccaro said, noting that Beachfront employs engineers rather than salespeople.

"Getting those systems to speak the same language is hard, and getting those systems to transact in anything close to real time is super-difficult, because it's not how those systems were made to transact," he said.

Beachfront works with multichannel video



programming distributors in the U.S., including Frontier Communications, and abroad.

For its enablement work, Beachfront gets paid every time its system delivers an ad. To get to scale quickly, Beachfront also found opportunities to work with outfits with technology used by large portions of the industry, Canoe Ventures and Sea Change International.

SeaChange servers are used by cable operators around the world to insert addressable ads down to the ZIP code level. When Beachfront figured out how to get those SeaChange servers to respond to requests from programmatic buyers, MVPDs saw increased demand and revenue for their local ads.

Similarly, Beachfront developed a programmatic module to connect buyers to Canoe's video-on-demand inventory from networks using Google Ad Manager or Canoe's own ad management platform.

"We like them because they are real and they actually do real work," Canoe Ventures senior VP of global sales and marketing Chris Pizzurro said of working with Beachfront. "And their stuff works."

What makes Beachfront unique is its familiarity with cable plants. Canoe saw what Beachfront had done for Frontier and felt reasonably sure that something similar would work for Canoe. "They had already built something for this purpose," Pizzurro said. "It was really about how they make their peanut butter talk to our jelly."

Canoe is working with Beachfront to integrate systems as it moves into international markets including Latin America and India, Pizzurro said.

Pizzurro said the communication that goes on to collect programmatic bids and insert the right ad into the right program must happen in milliseconds. If it's just a bit slow, the program will run without the ad and revenue is lost.

But when it works, "the national guys are happy and the local guys are happy because everyone has more ad impressions to sell," Pizzurro said.

Amobee, which starts its cross-platform campaigns for clients with linear, likes working with Beachfront.

"What was appealing to us is they are in the linear space through video-on-demand and addressable set-top box inventory," Amobee chief commercial officer Jack Bamberger said. "This was a perfect marriage between what they do and what we do as a technology provider, meeting our clients' unmet needs."

Competition Is Gearing Up

Beachfront certainly has competitors. First of all, there's Comcast owned FreeWheel, which so far has largely focused on inserting ads based on direct sales, as opposed to programmatically.

Roku last month agreed to buy dynamic ad-insertion technology and the patents it is based on from Nielsen, which had been in testing mode.

And the large media companies — NBCUniversal, The Walt Disney Co, WarnerMedia — might all at some point decide to either build technology or bring it in-house as they build their advanced advertising and direct-to-consumer functions.

Despite the challenges, Maccaro said he thinks the Beachfront strategy is sound because building this technology is hard. "If you try to do it in a siloed approach, you miss the scale opportunity," he said.

Maccaro said Beachfront is working on ways to address measurement and attribution. One key to its approach will be speed.

Traditionally, the turnaround on letting buyers know when ads ran and what impact they had was measured in months. Beachfront already has it down to a week and is aiming to do it within an hour.

"What we're trying to do on linear is get our ducks in a row to make sure we give the demand side everything that they get today in a time that's exponentially faster than they get it through a manual process," Maccaro said. "The goal is to get them the data in real time so they can make optimization decisions in real time." ●

Beachfront Media CEO Chris Maccaro sees opportunity in delivering advanced advertising capabilities to the 20 to 30 million cable set-tops likely to remain in consumers' homes for the foreseeable future.



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After Test, 'The Mediator' Looks at What's Next

Show starring Ice-T is airing in four-week tryout on Fox stations



By Paige Albiniak
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The Fox Television Stations are a little more than halfway through the trial run of *The Mediator with Ice-T*, which started on March 1, and so far they like what they see.

"They did a half-dozen innovative things with this show," Frank Cicha, executive VP, programming, Fox Television Stations, said. "They pitched us the show at the beginning of a pandemic — that's ballsy right there. They were ready to do the show all virtually if they had to. All they needed to know was that they had a platform and we were glad to give that to them."

The Mediator with Ice-T features the *Law & Order: SVU* star sitting at a desk and speaking to two complainants who are calling in remotely. They present their case to him, he checks in with experts, and then he and the experts return to the litigants to weigh in on the case. That the complainants are calling in remotely, just like everyone has been doing with their family, friends and co-workers for the past year, feels very of the moment.

"I've always thought Ice would be an



amazing mediator," executive producer Andre Jetmir said. "I always look to him as someone who is very calm. When it comes to considering people's problems, he's like a fish to water."

Whether or not *The Mediator* gets picked up into national syndication remains to be seen,

Options aside from broadcast syndication are under consideration for *The Mediator with Ice-T*.

and stations' schedules for fall 2021 are largely settled. But there are other options for the show besides just broadcast syndication, and *The Mediator's* team is willing to consider them.

Fox now owns advertising-supported streamer Tubi, and the company is interested in making programming-sharing deals for the streamer. It also has digital network Fox Soul, which already airs such syndicated shows as Fox-produced-and-distributed *Divorce Court* and *Dish Nation*. Jetmir is making plans to shoot another 100 to 150 episodes of *The Mediator* over the summer.

"We are looking at a couple of streamers and at a couple of second and third windows," Jetmir said. "There are so many different ways we can monetize this production. If Fox, God willing, has us back, that would be the tip of the spear."

Should the show end up being distributed across multiple platforms, it could be one of the first new first-run syndicated shows to be cleared across multiple streaming platforms as well as on TV stations. But in an economically challenging environment, that sort of distribution strategy is necessary to make first-run shows viable for both TV stations and producers.

Another potential piece of the business model is an app that would offer professional mediation for a small fee, Jetmir said. "Mediation is the only legal system that people have in this country that doesn't cost them a bazillion dollars," he said.

With all of those revenue-driving options on the table, Jetmir feels optimistic about *The Mediator*.

"Ice really loves this thing," Jetmir said. "I've known him for more than 20 years and I've never seen him so engaged with what he's doing. It's almost like when he's performing on stage, that's how engaged he is." ●

WRIGLEY MEDIA GROUP TO DEBUT 'RELATIVE JUSTICE' THIS FALL

WRIGLEY MEDIA GROUP, founded by Wrigley Media owner Misdee Wrigley Miller, will launch its first show into broadcast syndication this fall: half-hour court strip *Relative Justice*, starring Judge Rhonda Wills.

The show is cleared in 75% of the U.S., including in the top 43 of the top 50 markets, on the CBS, Sinclair, Nexstar, Scripps, Tegna, Weigel and Gray station groups. It had been slated to launch in fall 2020 but, like so many other shows, was pushed back due to the pandemic.

Judge Rhonda Wills currently practices law in Los Angeles but is also licensed to practice in Texas and New

York. She previously appeared on WE tv's *Sisters in Law* and also has appeared as a legal contributor for such outlets as CNN. The show will focus on mediating conflicts between family members, hence the title.

When the show launches this fall, it will have 150 episodes in the can, all shot this spring and summer at Wrigley's new media facility — a refurbished 10-theater movie complex in the heart of Lexington, Kentucky.



Wrigley Miller, who also owns and breeds horses, calls Lexington home. Wrigley Media Group is taking advantage of a tax incentive in the state, known as the Kentucky Film Incentive, to build out the studio and produce shows.

Litigants will join Judge Wills and a small gallery in the Lexington studio, with everyone observing appropriate COVID-19 protocols.

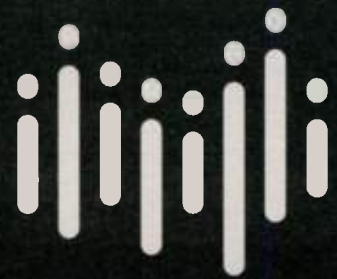
By the time *Relative Justice* launches in September, most of the country should be vaccinated and the pandemic fading, so the show decided to make the extra effort to produce the program as if the pandemic was behind them.

Besides *Relative Justice*, Wrigley Media Group is developing,

producing and selling other shows to other platforms. Wrigley chief content officer and *Relative Justice* executive producer Ross Babbit spent many years developing and producing lifestyle shows for such outlets as DIY, HGTV and Travel, and Wrigley produces such programs as *Escape to the Chateau* and *You Live in What?* for HGTV.

Wrigley Media Group is entering syndication because it's a space where the company can own the content. "It's a long-range play of having content we can own as well as being work-for-hire for a cable outlet," Babbit said.

Court also can be produced relatively efficiently, giving it a low barrier to entry. And there's some room to enter the syndicated court genre right now, with *Judge Judy* going out of production after this season and into repeats on stations, and MGM/Orion's court shows out of production and airing in repeats. — PA



C2HR 2020 Compensation Surveys **For Content Developers & Connectivity Providers**



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Big Media Takes on Big Tech

Push for antitrust carve-out fueled by pandemic, Big Tech blowback



By John Eggerton
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@eggerton

The political climate might finally be ripe for giving news publishers more clout in negotiations with the Big Tech platforms that draw eyeballs and ad dollars by aggregating the original work of others, including cable and broadcast news operations. Proponents say the alternative could be the death of independent local journalism. That's hyperbole, perhaps, but maybe now with a louder ring of truth.

Several factors are at work to give the latest shot at collective bargaining a chance. The COVID-19 pandemic has put an even greater emphasis on access to the latest news on everything from vaccine availability to what is opened or closed to what is safe to do.

Then there is the flood of fake news, particularly online, that has put a premium on trusted news sources, the kinds that take money to invest in reporters and editors and bureaus and fact-checkers.

Add in the fact that the Big Tech platforms like Google and Facebook — the 800-pound gorillas with whom news outlets must negotiate — aren't high on Capitol Hill's holiday card list, over concerns ranging from data breaches and promoting extremism to election ads and antitrust issues, and a bipartisan push for collective news bargaining could have legs after several years of trying.

Seeking a 'Fair Chance'

David Chavern, president of the News Media Alliance, representing more than 2,000 publishers, said the campaign represented by the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act is really only a "fair chance" for the news media to fight for themselves. "Today, local journalism is under threat because the dominant digital platforms control access to audiences and refuse to fairly value what we provide," Chavern has said in pushing for the legislation.

He has willing listeners on both sides of the aisle. Sens. John Kennedy (R-La.) and Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), political opposites in the chamber, said the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act would give "news content creators" — print, broadcast or digital — an antitrust safe harbor to negotiate collectively with digital platforms like Facebook and Google for carriage of their original content.

Rep. David Cicilline (D-R.I.), the House antitrust subcommittee chairman who is backing a similar bill, argued that if the balance



EMILY BARR, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS, TELEVISION BOARD CHAIR C-SPAN 3



FREE AND DIVERSE PRESS C-SPAN 3

of power remains as it is, Big Tech's dominance of digital advertising could be an "extinction-level event" for local media.

Similar bills have tried, and failed, to provide a safe harbor before, and a recent effort in Australia made headlines when Facebook pulled Australian news sources from domestic news feeds. (Facebook restored the Australian sources after legislators proposed tweaks to the law.)

But the new pandemic-driven normal, with edge providers seen increasingly as gatekeepers rather than as tenders of the virtuous internet garden, might improve the bill's prospects.

The bill would grant publishers immunity from federal and state antitrust laws for a 48-month period while they bargain collectively with digital platforms.

News content creators are defined as outlets with a dedicated professional editorial staff that create and distribute original news and related content concerning local, national or international matters of public interest on at least a weekly basis, and are marketed via subscriptions, advertising or sponsorship.

They include operations that provide original news and related content, at least 25% of which is current news and related content, or broadcast original news and related content via an FCC license.

The online content distributors that publishers would collectively negotiate with

NAB TV board chair Emily Barr (top) made local stations' case during a House antitrust subcommittee hearing on "Saving a Free and Diverse Press" (pictured below).

must have at least 1 billion active users per month on all their websites worldwide, so the bill is clearly aimed at the biggest platforms.

Seeking a Safe Harbor

Publishers under the News Media Alliance banner have for years been trying to get Congress to give news publishers a limited safe antitrust harbor so they can get tech platforms — Facebook and Google most notably — to pay for use of their content. That's because the tech platforms "take most of the advertising revenue sold against that content," the NMA contends, adding that "[a]dvertising revenue that previously went to the news publishers and allowed them to reinvest in quality journalism is now going to the platforms."

The bill says the joint negotiation is only allowed so long as negotiations are: not limited to price (no price fixing); are nondiscriminatory as to similarly situated news content creators; are directly related to the quality, accuracy, attribution or branding, and interoperability of news; and involve terms available to all news content creators.

The coordination among bidders has to be directly related to and reasonably necessary for negotiations with an online content distributor and cannot involve any person that is not a news content creator or online content distributor.

"We must enable news organizations to negotiate on a level playing field with the big tech companies if we want to preserve a strong and independent press," Klobuchar said of the bill. "This bipartisan legislation will improve the quality of reporting and ensure that journalists are able to continue their critical work. Our media outlets need a fighting chance when negotiating for fair treatment by the digital platforms where so many Americans consume their news."

Some congressional Republicans are warning about helping one powerful constituency against another. They suggested that *The New York Times*, for example, is plenty powerful on its own without letting it team up with other publishers, digital and otherwise. Broadcasters, though, argue that the power is squarely in the hands of Big Tech.

Local Ad Revenues at Risk

At a recent House antitrust subcommittee hearing on "Saving a Free and Diverse Press," Graham Media Group president Emily Barr, who chairs the National Association of Broadcasters TV board, told Congress: "The market power of the tech platforms undermines the online advertising model for local broadcast journalism in two significant ways. First, the tech platforms' role as content gatekeepers stifles our ability to generate user traffic independent of their services. Second, anti-competitive terms of service and a 'take it or leave it' approach leave local broadcasters with a below-market sliver of those advertising revenues that are derived through their products."

Barr, like Chavern, views the current imbalance as an extinction-level event.

"If we do nothing, local, independent journalism will not thrive," she said. "Indeed, it may not even survive." ●

People

Notable executives on the move



ABC NEWS

ABC News has added **Averil Harper** to its Washington-based political unit as deputy political director. Harper, who joined ABC in 2019, reported on the 2020 presidential primaries and the Biden-Harris campaign.



BROADCASTERS FOUNDATION

The Broadcasters Foundation of America named **Kathleen A. Kirby** as secretary and general counsel to the board. She is partner and co-chair of the Telecom, Media & Technology group at Wiley Rein.



COMCAST ADVERTISING

Pooja Midha has joined Comcast Advertising as chief growth officer, a new post overseeing global marketing across the division, Effectv and FreeWheel. She had been president of true[x].



KYRA MEDIA

Kyra Media, a Generation Z-focused media company based in New York, has tapped **Kelsey Arnold** as head of U.S. sales. She had been director of brand partnerships at Apartment Therapy Media.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Other industry execs making moves

AT&T has tapped **Jason Porter** as president of public sector and FirstNet, responsible for all federal, state, local government and education customers.

... Advertising technology startup **Advocado** has named three members to its board and advisory council: **Matthew Hong**, former chief operating officer at Turner Sports; **Gayle Meyers**, former chief growth officer, Luma Partners; and **Michael Beer**, head of financial strategies at Lumina Technologies.

... National Public Media president and CEO **Gina Garrubbo** was named chair of the Interactive Advertising Bureau's board of directors.

NBCUniversal president and chief business officer of global advertising and partnerships **Krishan Bhatia** was elected as vice chair. Also elected to three-year terms as new IAB board members were **Renie Anderson**, chief revenue officer and EVP, NFL Partnerships, National Football League; **Jerry Dischler**, VP and general manager, ads, Google; and **Rob Master**, VP, media and digital engagement, Unilever. ... **Wally Parks** has joined Wheelhouse Entertainment as executive VP of production. He was executive VP of production at All3Media America.



MEDIACOM

Media-buying agency MediaCom has named **Liza Davidian** as executive VP, investment and activation. The 20-year media veteran has worked with packaged goods, entertainment, financial and quick-service restaurant clients.



MEDIACOM

Yorele Goff has joined MediaCom as executive director, people. She comes from Publicis Spine, where she was chief talent officer responsible for the Platform, Technology and Data and Analytics teams.



PBS

Andrea Downing was named president of PBS Distribution (PBSd), heading strategic, financial and operations at the for-profit distributor of public media content. She had been co-president of PBSd alongside David Bernstein.



PBS NEWSHOUR

PBS NewsHour has named **Talesha Reynolds** as senior content and special projects producer for the nightly news broadcast. She had been a Washington-based producer of investigative, feature and breaking news for NBC Nightly News, Today and NBCNews.com.



ROHDE & SCHWARZ

Rohde & Schwarz has named **Jörg Fries** as VP, broadcast, amplifier & media solutions, heading the company's Broadcast and Media division. He had worked in the Wireless Multimedia division.



SAMBA TV

Jeremi Gorman has been named to the board of directors of San Francisco-based TV data and on-screen measurement firm Samba TV. She has served as chief business officer of Snap Inc. since 2018.



WHEELHOUSE

Studio Wheelhouse Entertainment has added **Janell Coles-English** as senior VP of business and legal affairs. She comes from Discovery Studios, where she was VP of business and legal affairs.



WHEELHOUSE

Chelsey Trowbridge has joined Wheelhouse Entertainment as senior VP of postproduction. She comes from Truly Original, where she was VP of postproduction overseeing schedules, budgets and the post team for more than 40 series.

Ad Meter

Who's spending what where

PROMO MOJO

Our exclusive weekly ranking of the programming that networks are promoting most heavily (March 8-14)



63rd Annual Grammy Awards, CBS

TV Ad Impressions: **305,484,857**
Total TV ad impressions within all U.S. households, including national linear (live and time-shifted), VOD plus OTT and local

Est. Media Value: **\$3,280,932**
Estimated media value of in-network promos


On the strength of 305.5 million TV ad impressions, a CBS promo for the 63rd Annual Grammy Awards takes first place — though that promotional push failed to sufficiently motivate audiences; ratings for the big show (which normally airs in January) were way down. Fox took second place to promote the *America's Most Wanted* reboot. Rounding out the ranking: No. 3 HGTV with a promo for *Rock the Block*; Disney Channel's "Use Your Voice" promo, telling the story of ballet dancer Misty Copeland, in fourth place; and National Geographic in fifth with a promo spot for *Genius: Aretha*. Notably, the *Rock the Block* spot generated the highest iSpot Attention Index number (121), meaning viewers were on average highly likely to watch it all the way through (vs. interrupting it by changing the channel, pulling up the guide, fast-forwarding or turning off the TV).

TOP 5 PROMOTIONS


- 1. Grammy Awards, CBS**
TV Ad Impressions **305,484,857**
Est. Media Value **\$3,280,932**
- 2. America's Most Wanted, Fox**
TV Ad Impressions **229,026,088**
Est. Media Value **\$1,486,036**
- 3. Rock the Block, HGTV**
TV Ad Impressions **215,375,524**
Est. Media Value **\$1,368,736**
- 4. 'Use Your Voice,' Disney Channel**
TV Ad Impressions **207,948,252**
Est. Media Value **\$2,967,109**
- 5. Genius, National Geographic**
TV Ad Impressions **186,541,337**
Est. Media Value **\$1,499,866**

BIG SPENDERS

Brands ranked by the greatest increase in TV spend (March 8-14)

1 
Lowe's


Spend Increase:	▲ 309%
Est. TV Spend:	\$8.8M
Spend Within Industry:	59%
Top Network:	NBC

2 
Verizon


Spend Increase:	▲ 171%
Est. TV Spend:	\$6.5M
Spend Within Industry:	13%
Top Network:	Telemundo

3 
Barbie

Spend Increase:	▲ 149%
Est. TV Spend:	\$2.6M
Spend Within Industry:	11%
Top Network:	Nick

4 
Warner Bros.


Spend Increase:	▲ 134%
Est. TV Spend:	\$5.8M
Spend Within Industry:	36%
Top Network:	CBS

5 
Pfizer


Spend Increase:	▲ 115%
Est. TV Spend:	\$3.3M
Spend Within Industry:	68%
Top Network:	CBS

MOST-SEEN TV ADS


Brands ranked by TV ad impressions (March 8-14)

1 
Liberty Mutual


TV Ad Impressions:	1.19B
Est. TV Spend:	\$11.6M
Interruption Rate:	1.97%
Top Show:	College Basketball

2 
GEICO


TV Ad Impressions:	1.03B
Est. TV Spend:	\$24.8M
Interruption Rate:	2.57%
Top Show:	College Basketball

3 
Progressive

TV Ad Impressions:	991.7M
Est. TV Spend:	\$19.4M
Interruption Rate:	2.15%
Top Show:	College Basketball

4 
Domino's

TV Ad Impressions:	929.4M
Est. TV Spend:	\$9.7M
Interruption Rate:	1.49%
Top Show:	Law & Order: SVU

5 
Wendy's

TV Ad Impressions:	839.1M
Est. TV Spend:	\$9.8M
Interruption Rate:	1.92%
Top Show:	College Basketball



B+C'S MOST VIEWED

Top stories on broadcastingcable.com, Feb. 15-March 17

1. Rep. James Clyburn Reintroduces \$100 Billion Internet-for-All Bill
2. Ergen: 'We Stumbled' With Sling TV
3. Cord-Cutting Still Nearly Double for the Big Four U.S. Pay TV Providers Over 2018
4. House Dems Pressure Distributors to Justify Carrying Fox News, Others
5. True-Crime Story 'The Widower' Gets Three-Night Run on NBC

To read these stories, go to broadcastingcable.com.

ROKU OS ONLY CONTROLS 22% OF THE INSTALLED BASE OF U.S. CONNECTED TV DEVICES

FLYING SOMEWHAT in the face of the popular notion that the Roku platform controls up to half of video streaming in the U.S., U.K. research company Strategy Analytics published new data suggesting Roku's control of the installed base of connected TV devices in the U.S. was actually only 22% at the end of 2020.

Globally, Roku's share of the smart TV, OTT player and game console platform market is even more diluted, with the firm pegging the Roku OS at only 6.4% market share, trailing leader Samsung's smart TV OS Tizen, which controls 12.7%.

With equity analysts and media pundits pondering a future in which Roku runs away with the game ball, controlling a critical mass of viewer data and advanced advertising levers, this kind of information matters.

Other research companies peg Roku's domestic installed base market share at around 40% or more. And Strategy Analytics itself concedes that the Roku OS currently powers a third of the smart TVs sold in the U.S. We reached out to London to ask David Watkins, director of TV streaming platforms for Strategy Analytics, how could his report be right?

Without specifying any of his employer's research competitors, Watkins said Strategy Analytics data isn't survey-based. Its information, rather, is culled directly from vendors and retailers. Fair enough.

And the metric in question is "installed base," not current sales or shipments and not active devices.

"We're not distinguishing usage here — usage could be very different," Watkins said. "We're simply reporting the platforms installed in people's homes, regardless of whether they're used or not."

So while sales of Roku smart TVs through OEM brands like TCL and Hisense have been hot of late, the built up "installed base" of Roku devices won't immediately reflect a change in market dynamics. This is particularly true for smart TVs, which have a life cycle of around six years, Watkins said. OTT players, dongles and sticks are

replaced more often, he added, anywhere from two and half to four years.

Roku is still the installed base leader in the U.S. But globally, Tizen is the leader in 22 of the 25 countries surveyed in the Strategy Analytics report, while LG's smart TV OS, webOS, ranks second in 13 markets.

Overall, Strategy Analytics said the number of connected TV devices in use worldwide increased by 21% year over year, to 162.3 million.

Google's Android TV saw the biggest increase in installed base growth at 42%, the report said, followed by Roku (40%) and Amazon fire TV (35%). Game consoles Sony PlayStation and Microsoft Xbox saw installed base declines, as did

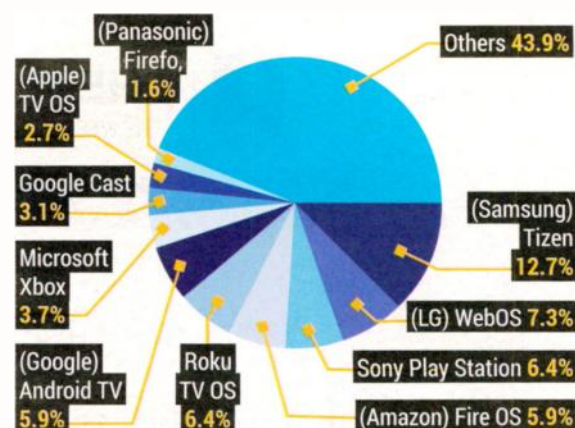
Google's recently supplanted Chromecast platform. — Daniel Frankel

For more stories like this, go to nexttv.com.

NEXT TV

Connected TV Platforms - Global Device Installed Base % Share - End 2020

Total installed devices: 1.28 billion



SOURCE: Strategy Analytics' TV Streaming Platforms Service, March 2021

STICKIEST SHOWS Top 10 cable programs ranked by viewer engagement*



Stickiness Rank	Ratings Rank	Telecast (Week Ending March 7)	Network	Stickiness Index*
1	32	Fit for a Prince	Hallmark Channel	153
2	1	2021 NBA All-Star Game	TNT	148
3	100	The Walking Dead	AMC	147
4	41	The Curse of Oak Island	History	142
5	48	When Calls the Heart	Hallmark Channel	140
6	120	Tyler Perry's Sistas	BET	140
7	196	Married at First Sight	Lifetime	139
8	85	90 Day Fiancé	TLC	138
9	864	La Rosa de Guadalupe	Galavisión	138
10	71	WWE Monday Night Raw	USA Network	137



The Stickiness Index looks at viewer engagement based on several factors. A higher number indicates more of the audience is tuned in for the duration of the telecast. * TV Engagement ratings powered by Comscore's TV Essentials. (Sorted by social media activity.)

Tyler Perry's Sistas: BET

STICKIEST SHOWS Top 10 broadcast programs ranked by viewer engagement*



Stickiness Rank	Ratings Rank	Telecast (Week of March 7)	Network	Stickiness Index*
1	1	Oprah With Meghan and Harry: A CBS Primetime Special	CBS	167
2	155	Enamorándonos	UniMás	152
3	91	Dulce Ambición	Univision	146
4	79	Vencer El Desamor	Univision	145
5	11	Blue Bloods	CBS	144
6	108	La Hija Del Embajador	Univision	142
7	3	The Voice	NBC	140
8	7	FBI	CBS	139
9	4	NCIS	CBS	138
10	139	Buscando a Frida	Telemundo	136

comscore The Stickiness Index looks at viewer engagement based on several factors. A higher number indicates more of the audience is tuned in for the duration of the telecast. * TV Engagement ratings powered by Comscore's TV Essentials. (Sorted by social media activity.)

THE BINGE REPORT

THE WEEK OF MARCH 8-15

TV Time users track the shows they're watching on TV via the TV Time app. That data is then used to determine the most-binged shows of the week in the U.S.

1		Modern Family peacock hulu	Share of binges: 1.75%
2		WandaVision Disney+	Share of binges: 1.64%
3		Ginny & Georgia NETFLIX	Share of binges: 1.46%
4		Schitt's Creek NETFLIX amazonPrime	Share of binges: 1.24%
5		Criminal Minds NETFLIX hulu	Share of binges: 1.15%
6		Grey's Anatomy NETFLIX hulu	Share of binges: 1.10%
7		Attack on Titan NETFLIX hulu	Share of binges: 0.94%
8		One Piece NETFLIX hulu	Share of binges: 0.86%
9		Good Girls NETFLIX hulu	Share of binges: 0.70%
10		911 FOXNOW hulu	Share of binges: 0.68%

Networks reflected don't include every viewing platform available nor total viewing in share of binge



To receive "The Binge Report" and other TV Time reports, visit <https://www.whipmedia.com/subscribe/>



NEXT TV'S MOST VIEWED

Top five stories on nexttv.com, Feb. 15-March 17

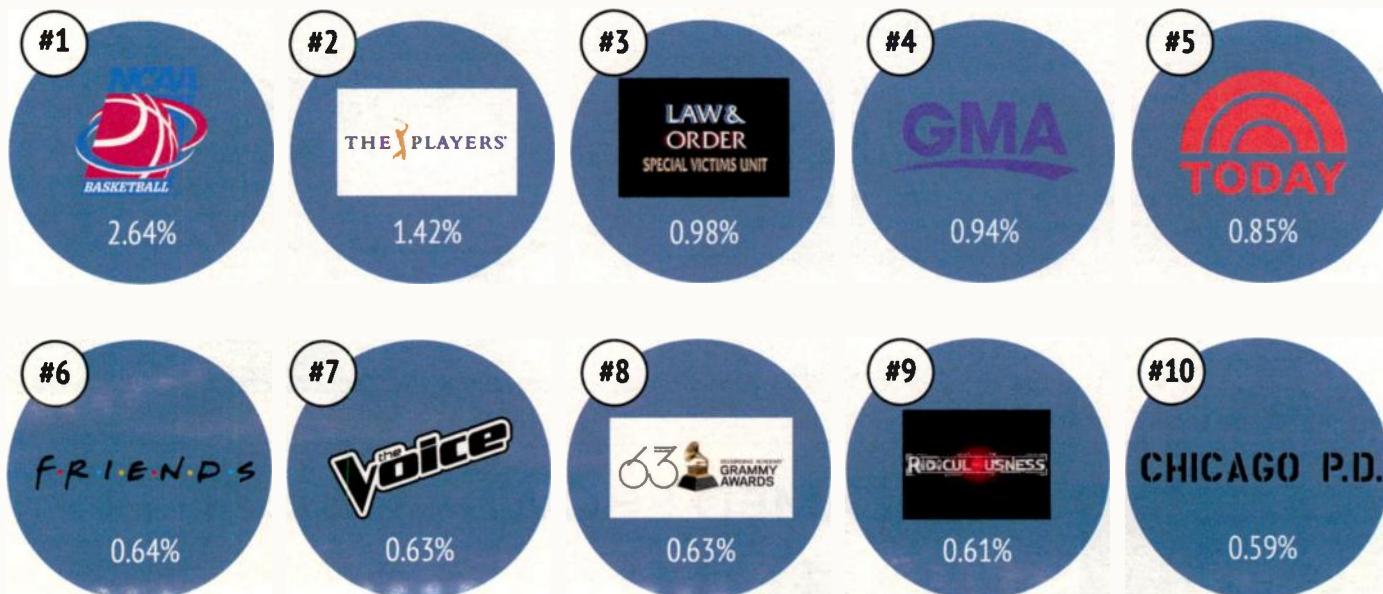
1. Ergen: 'We Stumbled' With Sling TV
2. Is Comcast Getting Ready to Expand Xfinity Flex Out of Footprint?
3. Cord Cutting Still Nearly Double For the Big Four U.S. Pay TV Providers Over 2018
4. Charter's Spectrum TV App Blackout on Roku Reaches 3-Month Mark (Updated)
5. House Dems Pressure Distributors to Justify Carrying Fox News, Others

To read these stories, go to nexttv.com.

Most-Watched Shows on TV

VIZIO

Of all the live, linear minutes watched by VIZIO smart TVs March 8 - 14, 2.64% of the time was spent watching college basketball. See what other shows captured the most watch-time* in the graphic below



Via Vizio's Inscope, the TV data company with insights from a panel of 17 million active and opted-in smart TVs. Data is linear, live TV only and includes all episode types (new and reruns). Rankings are by percent share duration, defined as 'of all the live, linear minutes watched last week, X% of the time was spent on show Y'



People Active Online* at Home During the Work Day

1/29/2020-3/12/2021 | Data from 14 Metro Areas, Updated Weekly

People active online* during the work day before COVID-19
 People active online* during the work day now

NATIONAL AVERAGE IN THE UNITED STATES



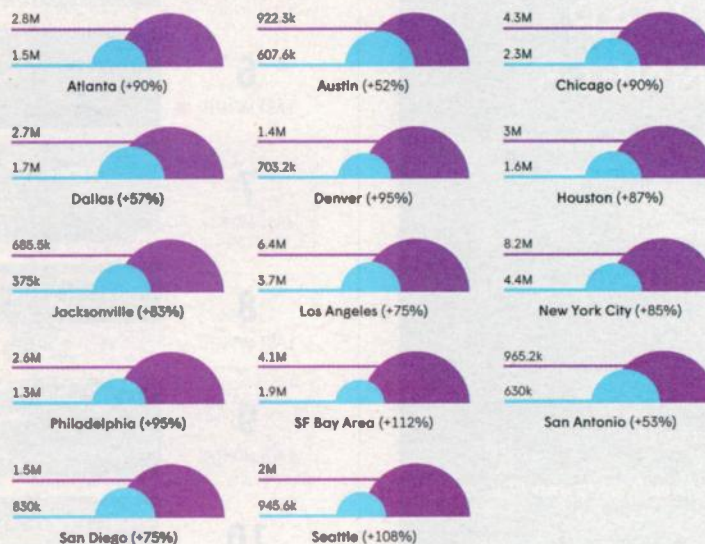
22.6 Million

were active online* during the work day before COVID-19

41.6 Million

are active online* during the work day now

CITY BY CITY BREAKDOWN



*Estimates based on metro area populations and anonymized data taken from a sample of U.S. households powered by the Plume Cloud. Active online defined as 6+ hours between 9a-6p.

VUIT'S MOST-WATCHED STATION FEEDS Top 10 local broadcasters streamed on the VUit app

Rank	Station	Location	Network	What news event drove tune-in?
1	KTSF	San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose	Lincoln Broadcasting	
2	WAFB*	Baton Rouge, La.	Gray Television	
3	WFMZ	Philadelphia	Maranatha Broadcasting	
4	WWTV	Traverse City, Mich.	Heritage Broadcasting	
5	WKYT	Lexington, Ky.	Gray Television	
6	KTUU	Anchorage, Alaska	Gray Television	
7	WSAZ	Charleston-Huntington, W. Va.	Gray Television	
8	KIEM	Eureka, Ore.	Gray Television	
9	KWTX	Waco-Temple-Bryan, Texas	Gray Television	
10	KFDA	Amarillo, Texas	Gray Television	

* Most out-of-market viewers



VUIT'S MOST POPULAR CHANNELS

Most-streamed channels on the VUit app for February 2021

1. NYC Live Street Cam
2. VUit Sports Replays
3. VUit eSports
4. Politics Uncut
5. Washington Post Live

To view these channels, go to www.VUit.com

STREAMED SHOWS Top 10 most-viewed pieces of content on the VUit app

1		Business First AM Daily news series
2		food.curated. Documentary series
3		Behind the Movement The story of Rosa Parks
4		Washington Post Live On-demand interviews
5		Martin Yan's Sizzling Wok Culinary program
6		Backlash VUit original short film
7		VUit High School Sports Replays On-demand local sports
8		Iditarod 2021 KTUU's annual event footage
9		Detroit Muscle Automotive enthusiast program
10		Amplify: Community Perspectives Local station featuring music

VUit VUit is the streaming service supported by 200 local TV stations. Run by Syncbak with an investment by Gray Television, VUit offers a variety of channels and local stations feeds.

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Charter Invests in Diversity and Inclusion

Chief diversity officer Rhonda Crichlow outlines operator's inclusion efforts



By R. Thomas Umstead
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@rtumstead30

Charter Communications's efforts at promoting diversity and inclusion are led by its SVP and chief diversity officer, Rhonda Crichlow. By supporting an increasingly diverse workforce and by targeting investments in local businesses and communities within its service footprint, Charter hopes to create a more inclusive environment that better serves both its employees and customers of color.

Crichlow spoke with B+C senior content producer R. Thomas Umstead about Charter's diversity efforts at the March 16 CultureX Conversations conference. Their full discussion, along with other content from the event, can be viewed on-demand by registering at the event website, culturexevents.com. Here are highlights of the conversation.

B+C: Why are diversity and inclusion so important to Charter Communications at this time?

Rhonda Crichlow: I think it's really important to us because we feel that our customers really deserve the best products and services that we can afford. Our philosophy around diversity and inclusion really stems from our focus on our business. We really try to develop a strategy and an approach that is designed to enable stronger business success and business performance. We recognize that, as an organization, we have the benefit of serving a fairly large footprint in the U.S. We operate out of 41 states, with 96,000 employees and roughly 31 million residential and business customers. We also recognize, frankly, that all of those customers have very unique perspectives, needs and desires and the products and services that they receive.

B+C: At this point is, Charter satisfied with where the company is regarding diversity and inclusion efforts, and if not, how do you get to that point?

RC: I would say we are satisfied with the progress that we've made to date, meaning that we have been able to accomplish a lot since introducing our strategy almost three years ago. We've seen significant progress in terms of our ability to engage with diverse

suppliers; we've introduced a number of new initiatives internally to continue to diversify our workforce externally to support communities across our footprint. Are we happy with our progress to date? Yes. Are we satisfied? No. I think we recognize that as an organization, we have more that we can and should do. We're very proud of the fact that 48% of our workforce, for example, represents people of color. What we'd really like to do is continue to push forward with ensuring that level of diversity is also represented at every management level within our organization and continue to grow the diversity and inclusiveness of our leadership teams within the organization.

B+C: What are you doing specifically to allow your employees to be part of the inclusion effort?

RC: We have a number of programs that we've introduced over the course of the last few years, very similar to the way many other companies approach diversity and inclusion. We have network groups, which we refer to as business resource groups, [that] are open to employees of all backgrounds and experiences, irrespective of whether they have the affinity of the group. We also launched a speaker series — Charter's version of a TED Talk, called Charter Inclusion Talks — where, to celebrate cultural and identity months, we will either invite external speakers in or tap into our employees to talk about some aspect of diversity and inclusion and or provide career advice for employees who attend those sessions.

B+C: Did the events of last year and the racial reckoning that the country experienced affect some of the things that you're looking to do going forward?

RC: I would say it absolutely did. I think, writ large, one of the benefits of the experience that we had over the course of the last year is I do feel that it has raised a level of awareness outside of communities of color, of some of the very real and significant challenges that people still face in our country. I think there is also a recognition that people aren't able to necessarily divorce their experience and how they perceive their external environment from the way that they come into the office. So I think it's required all of us in the diversity and inclusion space — and frankly leaders across all companies — to really think about what is it that we need to



Charter's Rhonda Crichlow: "Are we happy with our progress to date? Yes. Are we satisfied? No."

do to ensure that we're creating inclusive and equitable workplaces for all employees, and what is it that we could do to continue to help people to understand that unique backgrounds and experiences of those employees.

We have a curriculum that we have been working on that we decided to make some tweaks to in light of what took place last year to make sure that we felt the content was very relevant to help our leaders and managers engage across lines of difference. We introduced a really interesting philanthropic initiative called the Spectrum Community Investment Loan Fund. Last year, we introduced that program about a month before the pandemic hit in February, and we started with a \$10 million commitment designed to work with community development [and] financial institutions to provide loans and other resources to businesses and underserved communities, which we now recognize by virtue of the pandemic and some of the social unrest have been disproportionately impacted by the events of last year.

I'm really proud to say this since we started that program, we've actually more than doubled the investment. We created a very unique partnership with the National Urban League and the National Action Network where \$10 million of those funds will be invested specifically in programs and businesses in Black and Brown communities to really help revive those communities across our footprint.

B+C: Is upper management invested, and how are they participating in some of the things you're working on?

RC: I would say they're incredibly invested. What I'm very pleased about is that our executive leadership team has been incredibly supportive and engaged since I joined the organization. I think they manifest their commitment to diversity and inclusion in a number of different ways. One, we do have an internal council that we call our executive steering committee for diversity and inclusion. It consists of our executive vice presidents, our head of communications, myself, inclusive of our CEO and president. We meet on a quarterly basis where we review our progress against diversity and inclusion. Our CEO is a regular presence at those meetings. We present annually to our board of directors.

This year, we are really excited because we have started to really try to more deeply embed our strategy, particularly around our talent and inclusion objectives. We're working hand in hand with every executive VP and their leadership teams on diversity action plans that they have created, which allow them to really look directly at their workforces, understand where they have areas of opportunity, understand where they have opportunities to perhaps facilitate a more inclusive work culture within their organizations. We're working on developing specific plans with them and implementing those plans this year. ●

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Jessica Mendoza

Baseball and Softball Analyst, ESPN

MLB trailblazer trades play-by-play booth for backyard studio

ESPN baseball and softball analyst Jessica Mendoza has been a trailblazer.

The Olympic gold medal-winning softball star made history as the first female Major League Baseball game analyst on television in 2015 and later that season was the first to do a postseason game.

Last year, she did her broadcasts from what she calls her shop — a barn behind her home in Bend, Oregon. It houses a pickleball court, a gym, a trailer and a studio.

“It was nice having a separate place while I was doing Korean Baseball Organization games in the middle of the night,” she said. When the kids come home from school, they know not to walk in, although her dog did once make a ninth-inning appearance.

With baseball season approaching, B+C business editor Jon Lafayette interviewed Mendoza. Here’s an edited transcript of their conversation.

What did you miss about not being at the ballpark last season? From an analyst point of view, the bulk of what I love to bring to the broadcast comes from standing around that batting cage. You hear someone yell to Justin Turner about his front foot, then you ask him and he says he’s working on getting his weight distributed more on his front side, and that ends up being an entire inning of a conversation.

How has covering games from home changed how you do your job? Now instead of waiting till I’m around players, I dive more into the numbers and into their personalities. I’ve checked more Instagrams from a lot of players and it’s interesting what they put out there. I’ve actually learned more about them as people by scrolling their timelines and seeing things you didn’t know they were passionate about, like social justice, especially after [last year’s killing of] George Floyd. It really blew me away because in the sport of baseball, it’s not common to say the hard thing. You see that in football, the NBA for sure, but not in baseball.

How has working from home changed your personal time? I’ve been on travel teams since I was 10 and I never really knew a different life. Now we spend a ton of time in the outdoors. We bought a trailer and we park in the middle of a forest. We’re 30 minutes from a lift and we’re on the mountain snowboarding with our two boys two or three days a week. I started skate-skiing. I like it because it’s very difficult. I face-planted twice the last time I went. And I’m doing mountain bike camp, learning how to go down mountains and all kinds of crazy stuff I should not be doing now that I’m 40.

When you get that call to go cover games in New York, Boston and Baltimore, how are you going to react? I’m hoping there will be some sort of hybrid

BONUS FIVE

All-time favorite TV show? *Sex and the City*. When my sisters all get together, we’ll watch like 12 episodes.

A favorite app? Recreation.gov. It’s where you go to book campsites. I probably booked 30 different campsites last month. My husband says I’m obsessed.

Destination on your bucket list? Last November, I had booked a trip to Peru to hike Machu Picchu. A friend coaches a softball team down there and I was going to stay with some of the families and get the real history of that area.

Books on your nightstand? Glennon Doyle’s *Untamed*, Gloria Steinem’s *My Life on the Road* and *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi

Recent memorable meal? My husband and I just went on a date, which is rare. Sushi’s my favorite food and we went to Bend Izakaya Ronin. It opened right after COVID and we wanted to support it. We talked with the owner and the waiters for hours. The food was amazing, too. It was so cool being back in a restaurant in person.

lifestyle change. How much do we need to be there in person from a cost standpoint? From a life standpoint? Can we still be as productive, if not more productive? Getting to the airport, checking in through security, that takes away time. That time could be spent with my family, yes, but also in preparation.

You’ve been a trailblazer. Do you still feel it’s important to be an inspiration for girls and women? Everyone has days where work is hard and stressful, but it just takes a moment to remind you why it’s worth it. A lot of times it’s a father. His daughter kept asking why there weren’t any women on the Yankees, and then she heard my voice, and it was like, ‘Yes, women are in baseball.’ My husband reminds me all the time, it’s bigger than me. It’s about all these girls. It’s about the women. It’s about people I don’t even know. ●

Jessica Mendoza with ESPN colleague Sage Steele at the 2019 espnW Women + Sports Summit in Newport Coast, Calif.





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Broadcasting Multichannel News + Cable

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MARKS TV'S PROGRESS

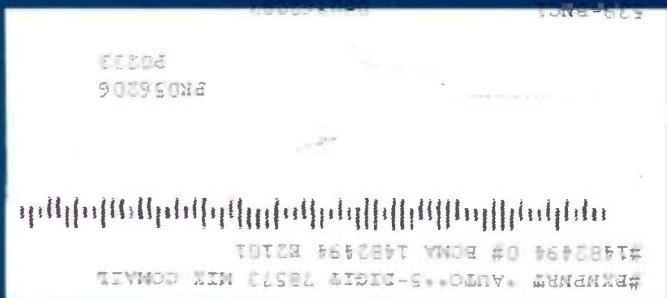


STREET BEAT

The massive stories of the past year-plus all had relevant local angles, and stations were there to feed ravenous viewers



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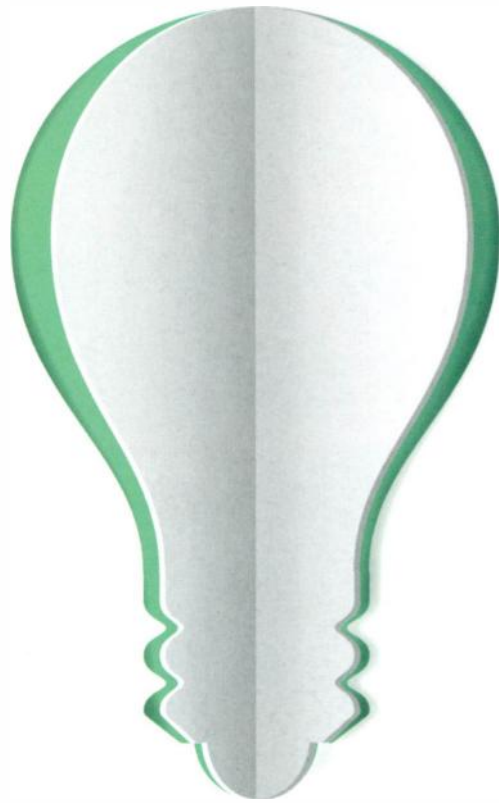


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Broadcasting Multichannel + Cable News

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8 COVER STORY

FEATURES

8 COVER STORY

Even as viewers turn away from traditional TV sources, lots and lots of them are tuning in to their trusted local stations when big news breaks.

By Michael Malone

14 SPECIAL REPORT: PRIDE TV SUMMIT

Future's first-ever Pride TV Summit spotlighted those in the forefront of industry inclusion efforts, including the eight inaugural Pride TV Award winners.

28 SYNDICATION

With COVID-19 variants surging and vaccinations continuing, studio audiences are making a tentative return to Wendy Williams and other syndicated shows.

By Paige Albiniak



14 SPECIAL REPORT: PRIDE TV

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28 SYNDICATION

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FUTURE

Connectors
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WOW Cable-System Sales Highlight Valuation Disparity

Overbuilder sells five markets for \$1.786 billion, or 11 times cash flow



By Mike Farrell
michael.farrell@futurenet.com
@MikeFCable

Two weeks after telling a Wall Street audience that rising valuations could help it pay down debt, WideOpenWest reached agreements to sell systems in five markets with a combined 324,000 broadband customers to Astound Broadband and Atlantic Broadband for \$1.786 billion, a deal some analysts believe highlights the sometimes glaring gap between private and public market valuations for cable companies.

WOW agreed on June 30 to sell systems in Chicago; Anne Arundel, Maryland; and Evansville, Indiana; to Astound Broadband for \$661 million. At the same time, Atlantic Broadband agreed to buy the overbuilder's systems in Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio for \$1.125 billion.

WOW said it would use the proceeds to reduce leverage from its current 5 times forward-looking cash flow to 2.5 times, and fund ongoing expansion of its network through edge-out programs and greenfield construction. The deal is expected to close before the end of the year.

The deal comes after WOW chief financial officer John Rego said at the Credit Suisse Virtual Communication conference on June 15 that the company, if it wanted to pay down debt more quickly, could do so by "selling a market or two."

The deal multiple works out to about 11 times cash flow, in line with recent private cable transactions that averaged between 12 and 15 times EBITDA.

B. Riley Financial media analyst Daniel Day, who raised his 12-month price target on the stock to \$30 per share after the deal, wrote in a research note that WOW was trading at about 8 times cash flow before the sale, further highlighting the disparity between public and private valuations.

He wrote that the gap is even steeper on a broadband subscriber basis, where WOW's \$4,578 enterprise value per broadband customer is 60% less than its peer group.

"In our view, a 30% to 40% 'overbuilder discount' is more appropriate," Day wrote, adding at that level, WOW's share price would be \$35.

The sale helped push WOW stock up more than 17% (\$3.09 each) to \$21.34 on June 30. The shares were trading at \$21.61 each in afternoon trading on July 2.

For Astound, which agreed in November to be purchased by Stonepeak

The WOW deal should bolster Astound Broadband's already competitive position in Chicago and Washington, D.C., said CEO Jim Holanda.

Infrastructure Partners for \$8.1 billion, the deal will significantly boost its presence in two of its top markets.

According to the deal, Astound will receive about 128,000 residential and business customers from WOW. The addition of the WOW systems will double Astound's Chicago homes-passed to about 800,000 residences, while increasing its Washington, D.C. footprint (Anne Arundel is near Baltimore) by about one-third.

In Chicago, Astound competes against Comcast and AT&T, and in Washington, D.C., it goes up against Comcast and Verizon's Fios. Astound CEO Jim Holanda said the added bulk will give it more of an advantage in what has already been a healthy competition.

Big Boost in Chicago, D.C.

"I like to think we have been a strong competitor in both of those markets, certainly in the 11 years we've been operating RCN, and I would expect to continue to be a strong competitor against them in these two markets as we go forward," Holanda said. Atlantic Broadband will receive about 196,000 internet, 61,000 video and 35,000 telephone customers in Cleveland and Columbus as part of the deal. In a press release, Cogeco Communications president and CEO Philippe Jetté said the deal will add "significant scale" to its U.S. business, raising its total internet customers by about 38%. In addition, the purchase will mean Montreal-based Cogeco will generate more than half of its revenue in the U.S.

Atlantic Broadband has traditionally stuck close to East Coast markets so the WOW deal represents "a major step" in its strategy, ABB president Frank van der Post said in a press release.

"The Ohio broadband systems' geographic fit with our Pennsylvania operations, combined with our success in winning customer share in competitive markets and our experience integrating acquired properties, will ensure operational efficiencies, a seamless transition for customers, and strong growth in these markets," van der Post said. ●



WOW'S THE WORD

WideOpenWest agreed to sell systems in five markets with about 324,000 customers to Atlantic Broadband and Astound Broadband for a collective \$1.786 billion.

BUYER	PROPERTIES	SUBSCRIBERS	PRICE
ATLANTIC BROADBAND	Cleveland; Columbus, Ohio	196,000	\$1.125 Billion
ASTOUND BROADBAND	Chicago; Anne Arundel, Md.; Evansville, Ind.	128,000	\$661 Million

SOURCE: Company Reports



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THE WATCHMAN

Senior content producer Michael Malone's look at the programming scene



By Michael Malone
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Light at 'The End' of The Tunnel on Showtime

Dark comedy *The End* premieres on Showtime July 18. Frances O'Connor plays a doctor in Australia, and Harriet Walter (pictured) portrays her mother, who arrives from England after a scary incident to be closer to family. She's put up in a village for old folks, and does not want to be there.

Creator Samantha Strauss describes *The End* as "three generations of people who are trying to figure out who they are and who they want to be."

At its core, it's a "mother and daughter story."

Euthanasia is a major theme of the series. "All of us deal with death in private and behind closed doors, and we don't often find the space to talk about it with other people," Strauss said.



"Hopefully there's a spirit underneath the series that is life-affirming."

The End is listed as a comedy, but features just as much drama, whether between Kate and her mother Edie, or Kate and her children, Oberon, who is trans, and Persephone. Asked whether *The End* is a comedy or drama, Strauss said, "It's hard for me to make that distinction. Hopefully it does both."

'Ultra'-Offbeat Animated Show on AMC Plus

Ultra City Smiths premieres on AMC Plus July 22. It comes from Steve Conrad, creator of short-lived but super-fun *Patriot* on Amazon Prime, and reunites much of the cast from that quirky drama.

AMC calls *Ultra City Smiths* a "stop-motion, animated baby doll series." Kristen Bell, Dax Shepard and John C. Reilly are in the voice cast, along with *Patriot* alums Chris Conrad, Kurtwood Smith, Terry O'Quinn and Debra Winger.

Ultra City has giant crime and corruption issues. The series centers on the disappearance of its biggest magnate. A pair of detectives hustles to track down the guilty party.

A funky mix of stop motion and film noir, *Ultra City Smiths* was "eight years in the offing," according to Conrad. "It took a while but we sure wound up in the right place."

It will air on AMC linear in the fall.

Singer Tom Waits sent an encouraging note to Conrad years ago about *Patriot*, which "meant a great, great deal to me," he related.

Conrad reached out to see if Waits wanted to be a part of *Ultra City Smiths*. Waits is the narrator, an "omniscient guide to *Ultra City* and its many dark corners and alleyways and dead-end streets," said Conrad. ●

WATCH THIS ...



American Horror Stories

American Horror Stories premieres on FX July 15. The anthology spinoff features a different tale of terror every week. Also on July 15, *Dr. Death* kicks off on Peacock. Based on a podcast, *Dr. Death* is inspired by the true story of a doctor in Dallas whose patients came in for spinal surgery and left maimed or dead. And fantasy adventure series *The Outpost* debuts on The CW. It's about the lone survivor of a village destroyed



The Outpost

by mercenaries, who tracks down the killers and learns of her mysterious superpower. On July 16, *McCartney 3, 2, 1* takes flight on Hulu. The ex-Beatle pairs up with superstar producer Rick Rubin to go through some tapes found at Abbey Road Studios. And on July 18, *Power Book III: Raising Kanan* premieres on Starz. The prequel to the original *Power* shows Kanan Stark come of age. — MM



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LOCAL TV CONNECTS AMID CRISES

Multiple stories of a lifetime arrived in a short period of time, and all had critical local angles that viewers wanted — and needed



By Michael Malone
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Few would quibble that it is the age of streaming. Ratings across broadcast primetime are ailing, while series on the streamers, whether it was *Tiger King* on Netflix in the early days of the pandemic, *The Mandalorian* on Disney Plus more recently or another hit on another streamer, are commanding the eyeballs and buzz.

But a funny thing happened when the massive news stories of the past year-plus, including the pandemic, the racial reckoning following George Floyd's death and a monumental presidential election, dropped on America. Lots and lots of viewers turned to their trusted local stations for perspective on the major issues. The hot streamers may have dazzling entertainment fare, but what they didn't have was the latest news on COVID-19 in Columbus, or protests in Portland.

"What's missing from all those services is local news and information," Bill Hague, executive VP at consulting firm Magid, said. "The void on the streamers is local news and information. People still want to know what the weather is going to be, and the latest on COVID."

A Pew Research Center survey from April 2020 revealed the level of trust viewers have in their local TV outlets. Asked which source gets the facts right about COVID-19 “almost all or most of the time,” 50% of the respondents said “your local news media,” higher than “news media in general” at 44% and then-President Donald Trump and his administration (30%).

Pew also reported that 23% of respondents tuned in more to state and local news on the pandemic, while 15% follow network news more.

When the virus became a big news story early in 2020, local TV viewing skyrocketed. That so many people were stuck at home, and free to watch the noon news, the 4 p.m. telecast, the early evening programs, and live updates at various times of the day, boosted ratings dramatically. “The pandemic really underlined the value of local news,” said Stacy Owen, president and general manager of KNTV-KSTS in the San Francisco Bay Area. “When it comes to a story like that, people want to know, what about my county, my city, my neighborhood? How is the virus tracking in my county? That’s the kind of information you only get from local news.”

At 6 p.m. in Cleveland, in May 2020, WKYC averaged a 5.5 share in viewers 25-54, up 20% from the 4.6 it did in May 2019. From March to May 2020, WNBC New York saw “some of the highest ratings since 2007” in early-evening news, according to Eric Lerner, president and general manager.

WNJU New York president/GM Cristina Schwarz said viewers of the Telemundo station wanted translated updates on COVID-19 from civic officials in real time. “The connection was almost immediate, this desperation about, ‘What do I do, where do I go?’” she said. “There was an immediate need for information, a fear of the unknown, a desperate need for information.”



KHOU reporter Michelle Choi covers the funeral of George Floyd in Houston.

Following the COVID-19 outbreak was Floyd’s death at the hands of Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis in May and the ensuing protests around the country, then the November presidential election and the Jan. 6 siege on the Capitol. “Any one of those would’ve been the story of a lifetime, and they all happened in less than 12 months,” WKYC president and GM Micki Byrnes said. “These were huge national stories, but they were also local because they affected everybody.”

Nonstop News

News networks of course see viewership spikes when giant news stories happen, and stations are no different. “This is when local newsgathering sources rise to the occasion,” Hague said. “Whether it’s Sept. 11 or a hurricane or a flood, that is when local

stations become indispensable.”

Station newsrooms were energized by the blockbuster news events, and by viewers’ demand for a station’s take on them. “Internally, we felt like we had reignited our purpose,” Byrnes said. “We could literally save lives. We could improve lives. We could cut through the chaos overload of information and give people verified facts.”

Bobby Springer, president and GM of KHOU Houston, mentioned the news shifting from want-to-know to need-to-know for viewers across the past year-plus. “People returned to local media in a way that maybe they hadn’t done for a while,” he said. “Local journalists stepped up to the challenge.”

Byrnes described the WKYC newsroom as “re-energized” amidst the burst of global stories with local implications. “It sounds crazy,” she said, “but this is what we were born to do.”

Station-level fact-checking platforms, such as Tegna’s Verify and Hearst Television’s Get the Facts, proved essential for viewers in the era of misinformation. Verify was launched in 2015. Viewers submit questions, and the Verify team clarifies and verifies the query. In 2020, Verify traffic on Tegna sites increased more than 400%, prompting Tegna to launch a national standalone Verify brand in May, in



When it comes to a story like [the pandemic], people want to know, what about my county, my city, my neighborhood?

— Stacy Owen, president and GM, KNTV-KSTS, San Francisco Bay Area



Above left, anchor David Ushery covers New York City's reopening for WNBC. Above right, race and culture journalist Julian Glover reports for ABC's KGO San Francisco.

addition to the local versions.

"I can't think of a better tool to be at your disposal," Springer said. "This is what you're hearing in your world, and here are four or five experts, and this is what they said. The simplicity of it, the transparency of it, it helped build trust early on."

News in Normal Times

The challenge for stations is sustaining the ratings, and viewer interest, as the times become — knock on wood — more normal. Sampling of local content was sky high, and stations now hope they can keep the connection strong, especially with summer here, and ratings taking their usual dip.

Stations are wholly focused on strengthening their digital offerings to better connect with the next generation of news viewers, as the Netflix generation may not age into local newscasts the way their parents did. "Many young people came to TV in the early days of the crisis," Barbara Maushard, senior VP of news at Hearst TV, said. "If they get it from an app or a website, that's great, as long as they get the critical information."

At the station level, Glenn Haygood, WLKY Louisville president and GM, said younger users were consistently offering

feedback on content related to the social-justice movement that was major news in the city, where the March 2020 police-involved shooting of Breonna Taylor led to weeks of protests. "The notion that the younger segment of the population is not getting information from local broadcasters is just not true," he said. "Everyone certainly knew where to go."

Stations have done a better job of monetizing digital traffic, making it a legitimate revenue stream, and not just something there to promote the TV product. "We're interested in being on any platform that reaches folks," Lerner said. "OTT, Peacock, any digital platform, audio only — we don't care



"The notion that the younger segment of the population is not getting information from local broadcasters is just not true."

— **Glenn Haygood**, president and GM, WLKY Louisville

what platform it is. If there are eyeballs and listeners and viewers, we will be there."

With that in mind, WNBC premiered a 10-minute weekday digital newscast in April, available on the station's Roku and Apple TV channels, and through the station app.

Stations are taking lessons learned during COVID and applying them to news product today. Lerner said WNBC viewers liked watching anchors delivering the news from home, feeling it made for a more genuine relationship between them and the station. "They weren't fancy sets and the lighting wasn't perfect — we just had a camera and a little backdrop," he said.

As a result, NBC 4 anchors rarely sit behind desks these days. "We came to the conclusion that the desk is a barrier between us and our viewers," Lerner said. "Now they're in front of the desk, they're standing, they're moving. It's something new that has improved our newscasts."

Maushard said Hearst TV anchors broadcasting from a spare bedroom made for an at times more authentic



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presentation. Viewers were stuck at home, and reporters were as well. “We were a part of what’s happening, too,” she said.

Local News Boom

Stations have been expanding news at a feverish pace since the torrid news cycle began in early 2020. Stations averaged 6.2 hours of news per weekday in 2020, reported the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA), up 18 minutes from 2019. (Stations decreased news output on weekends last year.)

WAPT Jackson, Mississippi, introduced 9 p.m. news on its MeTV diginet in August. The CW outlet KNVA Austin, Texas, tacked on a 7-9 a.m. news in September. WNBC debuted 7 p.m. news in June.

The 3 p.m. slot has emerged as a popular news destination with many people working remotely. WOIO Cleveland, KGO San Francisco and KRON San Francisco all have premiered 3 p.m. news, and WXIX Cincinnati does so in the fall.

The content expansions go beyond news. WKYC has monthly special *The Turning Point*, dedicated to racial equality, and weekly public affairs program *We the People*. WATN Memphis had town halls titled “Uncomfortable Conversations” about racial relations and “Candid Conversations” about the COVID vaccine.

Newsroom chiefs speak of a more nimble approach to news garnered during lockdown times, with newsgathering work-arounds learned on digital platforms such as Zoom becoming part of everyday life in more normal times. Nearly 35% of stations reported an increase in local news in 2020, RTDNA reported, 7% more than in 2019, despite just 16% reporting a budget increase and 29% reporting a budget cut.

The racial reckoning in particular has prompted stations to rethink how they connect with the Black community in their markets. ABC’s owned stations have an 11-person race and culture team, with one journalist on that beat at each



Above, KNTV San Jose anchor Raj Jose interviews KXII Vice President Kamala Harris. Below, KHOU reporter Shern-Min Chow hosts a “Facts Not Fear” segment on COVID-19.

station. That team worked on the Juneteenth special *Our America: Black Freedom*, which aired on the stations, Localish and Hulu last month.

Springer, general manager of Tegna’s KHOU Houston, said station journalists are increasingly asked to share their experiences in the minority neighborhoods, which turn into lessons for the entire newsroom. “We started having better conversations inside our organization that resulted in a better knowledge and better sense of empathy,” he said.

Glenn Haygood is behind WLKY Louisville’s Marketing Awards Program, launched earlier this year and designed to help Black-owned businesses in Louisville. Nearly 100 businesses applied

for the program and 10 were selected, the winners getting \$100,000 grants. “The time was right for us to do something big and bold,” said Haygood. “There are so many ripple benefits we’re starting to see.”

Built For the Long Term

Initiatives such as WLKY’s marketing awards, station food banks and phone banks, and news content and specials, all make a compelling case as to why local broadcast should remain essential to viewers’ diets. The wild events of the past year-plus reminded viewers of the role strong stations play in their lives, and newsgatherers of their often critical job in a given market.

It was no great surprise that WKYC Cleveland improved its 6 p.m. news share 20% from May 2019 to May 2020. Perhaps more surprising is the station seeing an additional 11% gain at 6 p.m. from May 2020 to May 2021. WKYC’s 6 a.m. share, meanwhile, is up a staggering 40% from May 2020.

“All these challenges happened in a very short period of time, and local media stepped up in a way they hadn’t done before,” WKYC’s Byrnes said. “They had to. We had to. Because of that, I think we strengthened our connection to our communities.” ●





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Pride TV Awards Honor Leadership, Courage

Inaugural summit honors eight for contributions to LGBTQ+ community



By Joe Schramm
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@JoeSchramm

The Pride TV Awards for Leadership and Courage were presented by B+C and Multichannel News June 23 at the first-ever Pride TV Summit.

The conference, hosted by Luis Sandoval, correspondent for Univision's *Despierta América*, focused on the business of television programming featuring LGBTQ+ topics, storylines, characters or performers.

Eight honorees were recognized during the awards ceremony, hosted by DailyMailTV's Thomas Roberts, which was the final session of the conference. Each session will be available for viewing through late July at pridetvsummit.com.

Among the recipients were four organizations: Comcast, The CW, RAPP Worldwide Agency and SKYY Vodka. Four individual awards were presented to Gio Benitez, transportation correspondent for ABC News; Jonathan Capehart, host of *The Sunday Show with Jonathan Capehart* on MSNBC; Ilene Chaiken, showrunner and executive producer of NBC's *Law & Order: Organized Crime*; and Sarah Kate Ellis, president and CEO of GLAAD.

COMCAST, THE CW CITED: The award in the category for Membership or Employee Association was presented to Comcast in recognition of its fostering of an LGBTQ+ friendly culture both within the company and in the communities it serves. The award was accepted by Jan Hofmeyr, executive VP and chief network officer, Comcast NBCUniversal.

The CW was honored in the Television Network category for its ongoing commitment to scripted programming featuring LGBTQ+ characters (see page 16). Fans are likely familiar with the network's numerous superhero programs featuring characters



Below: ABC News transportation correspondent Gio Benitez

identified as LGBTQ+. The CW chairman and CEO Mark Pedowitz accepted on behalf of the network.

HITTING THE SKYY: SKYY Vodka was honored in the Brand Advertiser category. SKYY has long been positioned in advertising targeted to LGBTQ+ consumers through crossplatform media promotions and the sponsorship of LGBTQ+ community events. Over time, the brand's blue bottle has an iconic and highly recognized image in LGBTQ+ media. The award was accepted by Bernadette Knight, senior category marketing director at the Campari Group.

RAPP ON MEDIA BUYER: In the Media Buying Agency category, the award was presented to RAPP Worldwide, which was recognized for its commitment to aid leading brands in reaching out to LGBTQ+ consumers through multiplatform media, including TV and video tactics. Accepting was Devin O'Loughlin, global chief diversity, equity and inclusion and communications officer, global chairperson/Omnicom OPEN Pride, RAPP Worldwide. The agency also was acknowledged for a creative approach to openness and authenticity about those who identify as LGBTQ+.

SALUTE TO GIO: One award in particular acknowledged an on-screen talent in the category of professionalism and authenticity, both on and off camera, and at work and in his personal life. It was presented

to ABC News transportation correspondent Gio Benitez, a familiar face to *Good Morning America* viewers, for his on-screen professionalism and his authenticity as an out and proud member of the LGBTQ+ community.

CAPE-ING UP: Jonathan Capehart, host of MSNBC's *The Sunday Show with Jonathan Capehart*, was recognized for Political News Journalism. Capehart is an accomplished and outspoken journalist covering many political topics, including those that reflect equality for members of the LGBTQ+ community. In addition to his role on MSNBC, he also appears as part of "Brooks and Capehart" on the *PBS NewsHour*; and is an opinion writer for *The Washington Post*, serving on the newspaper's prestigious editorial board and hosting its *Cape Up* podcast.

ILENE CHAIKEN, CREATOR: The award in the category of Television Program Creator was presented to Ilene Chaiken in recognition of her authentic depiction of LGBTQ+ characters in television dramas. Known for her work with the iconic series *L Word* and *Empire*, Chaiken is currently the showrunner and executive producer of NBC's *Law & Order: Organized Crime*. The program is the newest addition to the popular and long-running, crime-drama franchise created by Dick Wolf. As with her past works, Chaiken has introduced a strong, leading LGBTQ+ character. This time, the character is a lesbian of color, Sgt. Ayanna Bell, played by Danielle Moné Truitt.

GLAAD ADVOCACY: The final Pride TV Award was presented in the category of Advocacy to Sarah Kate Ellis, the president and CEO of GLAAD. Ellis has worked through entertainment, news, and digital media to shift public attitudes and accelerate the acceptance of LGBTQ+ people. Under her direction, GLAAD has made many recent advances, like driving rapid response to news incidents involving LGBTQ+ people, as well as expanded coverage of stories reflecting LGBTQ+ communities in Spanish-language and Latinx media.

The awards were just one session within the daylong program that included 47 individuals as speakers, panelists, moderators, hosts and honorees. The conference was programmed by Schramm Marketing Group on behalf of B+C and Multichannel News. ●





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Character Diversity Makes for Better TV, The CW Says

Network reps LGBTQ+ viewers with out, trans heroes on 'Batwoman,' 'Supergirl'



By Michael Malone
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@BCMikMalone

The CW has pulled off a tricky act across the last several years — airing programming that appeals to a wide audience, as befits a broadcast network, while also

serving the LGBTQ+ community with a range of relevant, colorful characters. Fully 80% of the network's scripted shows in 2021-2022 feature characters representing the LGBTQ+ community.

It's a mission The CW takes very seriously. "As a network, The CW is in the business of inclusive storytelling, which begins with acknowledging that our audience and society-at-large is diverse and filled with a wide range of lifestyles and cultural values," The CW chairman and CEO Mark Pedowitz said.

The mission goes back at least a decade for The CW. The network had the first transgender superhero, in Nia Nal/Dreamer from *Supergirl*, portrayed by Nicole Maines; the first Black lesbian superhero in Anissa Pierce/Thunder from *Black Lightning*, played by Nafessa Williams; and the first lesbian superhero to headline a series, as was the case with Kate Kane of *Batwoman*, who was played by Ruby Rose.

After Rose departed the series, Javicia Leslie was cast as Ryan Wilder, a skilled-but-undisciplined fighter who becomes the new *Batwoman* after finding the Batsuit in an airplane crash.



Wilder gave The CW its first Black lesbian superhero to headline her own show.

In April, The CW launched the My CW Story campaign, which celebrates viewers who have been empowered by CW characters to live their true lives. As part of Pride Month, The CW rolled out the stories of James, a transgender man inspired by *Supergirl*'s Nia Nal, and Julia, a bisexual woman inspired by *Riverdale*'s Cheryl Blossom (played by Madelaine Petsch).

Gaye Hirsch heads development for The CW, Michael Roberts oversees programming, and Dana Theodoratos heads up casting. Network executives have said that showcasing characters who represent a diverse America helps combat ignorance and injustice, and inspires positive change in the nation and beyond. Diverse characters also make for more authentic storytelling.

"On every level at The CW and in partnership with our incredibly passionate creative talent on both sides of the camera, we continue to work to ensure the LGBTQ community is seen and heard," Pedowitz said, "as we continue to focus on telling genuine and credible stories that not only reflect the world we live in,

but also the world we all want it to be."

The CW's efforts to better represent LGBTQ+ viewers were recognized at June 23's Pride Leadership Awards, as B+C, Multichannel News and Next TV honored the network for outstanding leadership or extraordinary courage displayed in the efforts to present LGBTQ+-themed television content. To view the ceremony, visit pridetvsummit.com. ●

Below, Javicia Leslie portrayed television's first Black lesbian superhero to headline a show on The CW's *Batwoman*. At left, The CW chairman and CEO Mark Pedowitz.



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Casting Conversation: The Fine Line Between Art and Realism

Representation of the LGBTQ+ community continues to make inroads



By Marc Berman
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Once upon a time, LGBTQ+ representation on television came only sporadically, by way of series like comedies *Ellen*, *Friends* and *Will & Grace*, and dramas like *L.A. Law* and *Queer as Folk*. More recently, TV has made huge strides in representing the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities, both in scripted and nonscripted fare, courtesy of a wider array of entries, including dramas *Orange Is the New Black*, *Pose*, *Star Trek: Discovery*, *Supergirl* and *Batwoman*, and nonscripted *RuPaul's Drag Race* and *Big Brother*.

But the casting of LGBTQ roles in today's market is still a sensitive and potentially controversial issue, which was the focus of the Pride TV Summit's Casting Conversation, moderated by casting director Michael Donovan.

When is someone's sexual orientation relevant to playing a gay role? What about gay actors who play straight roles and vice versa? Is there a mandate within the broadcasters and/or via the public for more LGBTQ storylines? More importantly, is the culture changing?

More Openness, Inclusion

"One hundred percent, things are changing in the industry," said Caroline Dries, showrunner for The CW drama *Batwoman*. "There is a search for inclusion, and way more openness. And there is an excitement for these roles and a need for representation due to the raised awareness in social media.

"For me, as the creator and the storyteller, the No. 1 most important thing is that the character is authentic and a good representation of the community," Dries added.

Debuting in October 2019, gay actress Ruby



Taking part in the Casting Conversation: *Batwoman* showrunner Catherine Dries (top l.), NBCU Telemundo Enterprises EVP Karen Barroeta (top r.) and Nicole Maines (below), *Supergirl's Dreamer*.

Rose as Kate Kane (aka *Batwoman*) made television history as the first openly lesbian superhero on television. After an unexpected exit in season one, bisexual actress Javicia Leslie was cast as Ryan Wilder, the new *Batwoman*.

"When we were casting *Batwoman* originally, we ultimately went with an out actor," noted Dries. "In hindsight, thank God we did cast someone from the LGBTQ community, because of the amount of questions and conversations you are talking about on this subject. If we had cast a straight girl, it would have been a bit clumsy and awkward and probably would have felt inauthentic.

"I was also criticized because the character of Kate Kane was Jewish in the comic books and I did not cast a Jewish actress," Dries added. "Basically, you just have to choose your battles."

"Naturally, we cannot ask anyone about their sexuality when we cast a role," Karen Barroeta, executive VP at NBCUniversal Telemundo Enterprises, observed. "Only if the actor or actress is open about it, then you know it. For us, it is very important not to discriminate

based on sexuality or in any way."

Citing straight actors Eric McCormack in *Will & Grace*, Darren Criss in *The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story*, Tom Hanks in *Philadelphia* and Sean Penn in *Milk* as "performances we would have missed had we not had straight actors in the roles," Donovan also offered a quick clarification. "That's not to say a gay actor would not have been as good in those roles also," he said.

Casting Without Limits

For transgender actress Nicole Maines, who portrays Nia Nal (*Dreamer*), a transgender superhero, on *Supergirl*, only auditioning for trans character roles would mean far fewer opportunities. "Trans women are women and we can play women of all types, reinforcing a positive message," Maines said. "There is an idea of what trans

looks like, and when we are able to portray ourselves and tell our own stories you can actually see it. But we should not just be limited to trans roles."

"The most important thing is getting the stories out and telling the stories well because I think that, above all, changes hearts and minds," casting director Margery

Simkin said during the panel session.

"And I hope the goal, in the end, is that anybody can play anything. That's what acting is. It's not about being who you are. It's about who you are able to be through your craft and your ability."

"Inclusivity is going to continue to grow," Barroeta predicted. "And there will be a moment when it is all going to become normal and we are never going to have to say inclusive again." ●



The CW Network's unwavering commitment to inclusive LGBTQ storylines, characters and actors fosters a diverse and welcoming **safe space for everyone.**

— PRIDE IS —



TEGNA congratulates The CW Network for receiving the **PRIDE TV Summit Award for Leadership and Courage.**

TEGNA

LGBTQ+ Community Turns Up Heat on Political, Social Fronts

BNC's Aisha Mills discusses rights and representation at Pride TV Summit



By R. Thomas Umstead
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As the LGBTQ+ community continues the fight to get Congress to pass key legislation, it also looks to continue to build influence and support for its social rights movement, according to Black News Channel (BNC) host Aisha Mills.

Mills, who will host a not-yet-named daily primetime political news show for the African-American-targeted news channel that launched in February 2020, said the community is closely watching developments surrounding the The Equality Act, which will make sexual orientation and gender identity protected classes in America. The legislation, which would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, public accommodations, education, federally funded programs, credit and jury service, has passed the Democratic-controlled House but continues to languish in the Republican-held Senate.

"We have to guilt them all," Mills said in a Pride TV Summit interview with Multichannel News senior content producer, programming R. Thomas Umstead. "It's so much politics. ... but what we can do on the outside is continue to put pressure and just guilt the handful of Republican politicians who don't want it to move forward. The vast majority of people in America support LGBTQ equality fundamentally as it relates to basic dignity and rights."



Aisha Mills talks with senior content producer R. Thomas Umstead during the Pride TV Summit.

Outside of Congress, Mills—who served as the first African-American woman president of the Victory Fund LGBTQ+ political action group—said she is encouraged by the inroads the LGBTQ+ rights movement continues to make throughout society. In particular, she said people of color have played and continue to play a major role in leading the fight for LGBTQ+ equity and representation.

"It was actually Black, Latinx, trans-identified, nonbinary people who were the ones on the front lines, literally putting our bodies in harm's way that sparked the movement," she said. "Today, when we look at how far we've come, it is Black and Latinx people in storylines all throughout Hollywood, be it *Moonlight* or *Pose* or *Laverne Cox* in *Orange Is the New Black* that are the trendsetters, the culture makers and conversation creators." She also dismissed criticism of the

expanding acronyms such as LGBTQIA+ used to describe or define the community.

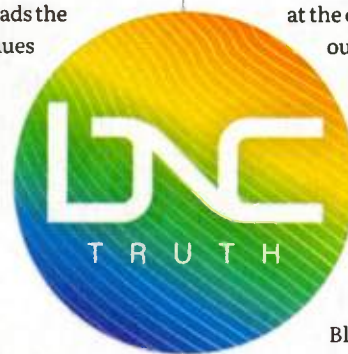
"We don't need to try to distill down and create some singular uniformity in order to be a community and to reflect people," she said. "Let's name it all and claim it all because at the end of the day we identify ourselves for ourselves by ourselves and be respected in how we want to be acknowledged and addressed."

BNC Strikes Verizon Deal

Mills's appearance at the Pride TV Summit came as Black News Channel reached a carriage agreement with Verizon Communications's Fios TV. The deal puts BNC, which launched in February 2020, in some 3.7 million more homes, extending its reach to nearly 60 million linear cable subscribers.

Verizon joins Comcast, DirecTV, Charter Communications and Dish Network as a distributor, according to the channel.

"Linear and digital platforms are seeing increasing value in BNC's unprecedented coverage of the experiences unfolding in Black and Brown communities as well as perspectives, viewpoints and stories that are not presented anywhere else," BNC president and CEO Princell Hair said. ●



CONGRATULATIONS to The CW Network

Mark
Pedowitz

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By Michael Malone
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With Discovery Plus pitching in for the first time, Discovery Channel's Shark Week is the largest in the 33-year history of the summer stunt. Discovery and Discovery Plus offer 45 hours of shark programming this year.

Shark Week kicked off July 11 and continues through July 18. The streaming channel gives Discovery a chance to reach a new audience, and a younger one, according to Howard Swartz, senior VP of documentaries and specials/factual networks and streaming. "We can take chances with the content we put on Discovery Plus," he said. "We can reach different audiences and we can reach new audiences."

Discovery Plus offers two shark documentaries. *Envoy: Shark Cull* is centered on some big names in ocean conservation revealing the importance of sharks in our oceans. Eric Bana narrates. *Fin* sees director Eli Roth and a group of scientists,



Shark Week will prowling the OTT waters of Discovery Plus along with Discovery Channel this year.

researchers and activists sail around the globe to investigate the death of millions of sharks, exposing a criminal enterprise. Executive producers include Leonardo DiCaprio, Nina Dobrev and Craig Piligian.

Other highlights include *Air Jaws: Going for Gold*, which shows the Air Jaws team at Seal Rock to capture the highest breach ever recorded; *MotherSharker*, which sees a team of scientists investigate where tiger sharks give birth; *Great White Comeback*, which looks into why great whites disappeared from South Africa; and *Mega Jaws of Bird Island*, also a look at great whites around South Africa.

"Great whites are such the stars of Shark Week," said Swartz.

Celeb specials include *Tiffany Haddish Does Shark Week*; *Jackass Shark Week*, with Johnny Knoxville and Steve-O; *Brad Paisley's Shark Country*; and *Dr. Pimple Popper Pops Shark Week*.

Shark Week also features a couple of film festivals: one centered on *Sharknado* on Discovery Plus, and another featuring the *Jaws* movies on Discovery. *Sharknado* stars Ian Ziering and Tara Reid host *The Real Sharknado* on Discovery July 14, looking into whether some of the things that happened in the *Sharknado* movies could ever happen in real life.

Everything that airs on Discovery will be available on Discovery Plus.

Unrelated to Shark Week, National Geographic kicked off Sharkfest July 5, offering 21 hours of new premieres and 60 hours of what it calls "enhanced content."

Swartz said Shark Week might be just what viewers are looking for after a rough year-plus. "It's a little bit of escapism with content like this because the news was so bleak in 2020 and into 2021," he said. "These animals, for me, have a re-enchanting-the-world quality. Their awe and wonder and beauty are so magnificent. They're so entertaining, so fun and so full of adventure, and we think audiences really respond to that." ●



REVIEW

TED LASSO

(Starts July 23 on Apple TV Plus)

JASON SUDEIKIS RETURNS as Ted Lasso, well-intentioned but clueless American football coach managing a soccer team in England. Lasso's AFC Richmond squad is mired in an endless streak of tie games. The team is presented with a golden chance to break the winless run as a Richmond striker lines up for a penalty kick. As he boots the ball, Richmond's greyhound mascot ambles onto the field and unwittingly fouls up the path to a win.

The striker, Dani Rojas (Cristo Fernández), is traumatized by the PK fail. Lasso likens his player to "an expensive tape measure — he snaps back real quick." Alas, Rojas does not, and the coaching staff wrestles with how best to handle a player in a serious funk.

Lasso faces another challenge when a former standout player seeks to come back to AFC Richmond after being booted off a cheesy reality TV show. His old teammates do not want him back.

Hannah Waddingham plays the Richmond owner Rebecca Welton. Brendan Hunt is Coach Beard, Brett Goldstein plays profane star player Roy Kent and Juno Temple plays Roy's girlfriend, Keeley Jones. Jeremy Swift is Higgins, director of football operations.

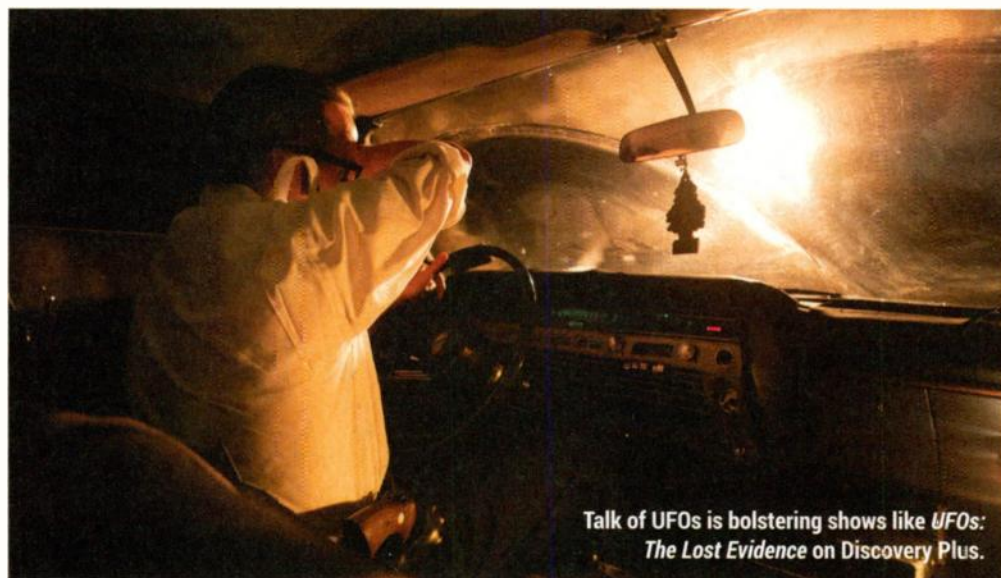
Sudeikis, also an executive producer, has Lasso nailed. As funny as he is, Lasso is best, and most human, when delivering other emotions, such as ruminating on his childhood history with dogs at a post-match press conference, and finding common ground with a despondent former player in a pub.

Season two spells new misadventures for Lasso and his squad. Sudeikis is up for the task, and the myriad of merry mishaps is fun to watch. — MM

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and the entire team at The CW for
their commitment to inclusion and for
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Congratulations from your Rideback
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Talk of UFOs is bolstering shows like *UFOs: The Lost Evidence* on Discovery Plus.

Growing UFO Interest Spawns Cable, Streaming Shows

Recent government reports on possible alien sightings spur rash of related content



By R. Thomas Umstead
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Recent government reports involving unidentified flying objects (UFOs) have given a shot of adrenaline to the UFO documentary series genre.

Showtime and Travel Channel, along with streaming services Peacock and Discovery Plus, are gearing up UFO-themed nonfiction series as more interest in the genre is piqued by government reports that, for the time in history, have at least acknowledged the possibility that we might not be alone in the universe.

"The genre is so rich with stories from Roswell to Betty and Barney Hill's abduction that are fascinating," Travel Channel general manager Matt Butler said, referring to the New Mexico site

that was home to a famous UFO incident and a New Hampshire incident from the 1960s. "When you overlay this government document and the potential that there are things that we can't explain, I think people get naturally curious."

With the intelligence community's recently released report summarizing government knowledge of unidentified aerial phenomena — and following continued interest in the 2017 *New York Times* story revealing the Pentagon had been secretly tracking UFOs for years — programmers are positioning to capitalize on increased interest in the phenomenon.

Showtime in August will air *UFO*, a four-part docuseries from J.J. Abrams that explores the fascination with the topic and what ulterior motives the government might have in keeping information quiet.

Discovery Plus is currently streaming a new limited documentary series dubbed *Roswell: The Final Verdict*, which explores the 74th

anniversary of the most infamous extraterrestrial incident in U.S. history. Butler said the docuseries — along with other genre-specific network series such as *UFOs: The Lost Evidence* and *UFO: Uncovering the Truth* — have looked to shine a light on a subject that has fascinated audiences for generations.

In June, sibling networks Discovery Channel, Science Channel and Travel Channel simulcasted a three-hour live special that delved further into the U.S. director of intelligence's unclassified *Preliminary Assessment: Unidentified Aerial Phenomena*. The special featured such government experts as NASA administrator Bill Nelson, former Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and retired intelligence officer Bob Wallace to discuss the findings from the expected intelligence report. Reid helped persuade the Senate to finance an investigation into UFOs, and the retired Nevada senator has been active in pursuing UFO truths.

Aided by New Video Tech

Along with the government report, Butler said new video technology that has better aided both pilots and civilians in capturing images of unidentified objects has also helped create additional curiosity about the genre.

"The topic has always been popular, but the government release of the documents brought people back to the topic," Butler said, adding that the network's most-watched shows include UFO-themed content. "The technology helped people share experiences that they are having, which really wasn't the case before. It really does get people to think about the topic."

While UFO-themed programming typically draws an older and mostly male viewer, networks such as Peacock hope new UFO-themed shows such as an upcoming limited series with singer/actress Demi Lovato will bring in a decidedly younger viewer to the genre. The four-part series, *Unidentified with Demi Lovato*, will attempt to uncover the truth about the UFO phenomena as Lovato — along with her sister and UFO-skeptic best friend — explore eyewitness encounters and secret government reports.

"Demi brings a huge, young audience to the show, but I think the subject matter alone brings a broad audience to it," Rod Aissa, executive VP of unscripted content for NBCUniversal, said. "Demi is not an expert, but she is curious, and wants to go

out and find out more. I think she is the eyes of the every-person and they will tune in.”

Catching Aliens on Camera

Butler added that shows like Travel's *Caught on Camera*, which examines viewer-submitted paranormal videos as well as UFO-related YouTube clips, have helped move the genre away from traditional UFO documentaries that featured recreated scenes of alien encounters and more into the reality genre that has greater appeal to younger viewers.

As more information is revealed about UFOs, executives said interest in content surrounding the category will only grow. Butler said Travel Channel in August will explore potential UFO activity in New York's Hudson Valley as part of its *Shock Docs* franchise. Two other *Shock Docs* episodes set to premiere later this year will focus on famous cases of alleged alien abduction.

“We're all poised to just jump in and tell some of those stories that may or may not have been classified up to this point,” he said.

Added Aissa: “The ongoing question about aliens allows for us to come in the door of curiosity, whether you're scared about aliens, or whether you're hoping that they'll come and fix health conditions, it hits right in the bull's-eye of curiosity.” ●

REVIEW

THE BEAST MUST DIE

(Now streaming on AMC Plus; debuted July 5)

AMC PLUS DELVES into the world of murder and revenge with the limited series *The Beast Must Die*.

The series starts out ominously with a young woman looking directly into the camera and uttering the words, “I'm going to kill a man,” setting the stage for a gripping thriller that frequently surprises throughout its six episodes. The woman, Frances Cairnes (Cush Jumbo), is in mourning after a trip to the British Isle of Wight with her son ends in tragedy when he is killed by a hit-and-run driver.

After the local police have virtually closed the book on the murder, Frances decides to search for the culprit herself. Her intent: to avenge her son by killing the killer. Posing as a novelist researching a murder mystery, her investigation leads her to George Rattery (Jared Harris), a wealthy and smug businessman whom Frances has suspicions about regarding the death of her son.



On the outside looking in is police officer Nigel Strangeways (Billy Howle), who recently joined the local police force. Tormented by the death of a fellow officer, Nigel consults a therapist while he settles into his new position as a replacement for a recently deceased officer who was investigating the hit and run. An unsatisfactory first encounter with Frances leaves Nigel wanting to investigate the incident further, but he fears that getting too close to the case will trigger emotions he's not ready to deal with.

As the six-episode story evolves, viewers will be captured by the performances of the lead actors and the intensity of the storyline as Frances and Nigel seek answers and resolution to situations that may not end so satisfactorily.

Episodes of *The Beast Must Die* are currently streaming on AMC Plus one week ahead of their premiere on the linear AMC cable network. — RTU

REVIEW

THE WHITE LOTUS

(Premieres Sunday, July 11, at 9 p.m. on HBO)

HBO TAKES A dark look at the actions and secrets of wealthy luxury resort vacationers in its new limited series *The White Lotus*.

The series, produced by Mike White (*Enlightened*), follows the exploits of rich-but-flawed vacationers traveling to an upscale hotel in Hawaii. The story takes place across one week, but the series opens at the end of the trip with a dead body being loaded onto an airplane, immediately signaling that all may have not gone well during the excursion.

Among the main travelers are honeymooners Shane (Jake Lacy) and his journalist wife Rachel (Alexandra Daddario), who are not seeing eye to eye on expectations with each other or the hotel, as well as emotional, middle-aged recluse Tanya (Jennifer

Coolidge), who carries her mother's ashes as she tries to come to terms with her death. Also, family fissures emerge from the Mossbacher clan which includes controlling CEO Nicole (Connie Britton), her sullen husband Mark (Steve Zahn), their withdrawn teenage son Quinn (Fred Hechinger), moody daughter Olivia (Sydney Sweeney) and her friend Paula (Brittany O'Grady). Trying often unsuccessfully to meet expectations and manage the many quirks of the pampered guests is hotel manager Armond (Murray Bartlett) and his overworked staff.

Also appearing in the strong ensemble cast are Natasha Rothwell, Molly Shannon and Jon Gries.

White weaves the parallel storylines together



nicely, keeping the plot interesting throughout the six episodes. Viewers, though, will have a tough time developing any sense of fondness for the mostly obnoxious characters, at least during the first few episodes. As the show evolves, viewers will determine for themselves which characters are worthy of their affection and their time in this quirky dramedy. — RTU



Cities by the Bay

As befits the Silicon Valley base, San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose stations are trying innovative things



By Michael Malone
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With much of the nation's—and the world's—technology innovations coming from the Bay Area, stations in San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose are wholly focused on reaching consumers on platforms beyond traditional TV. KPIX premiered streaming news site CBSN San Francisco Bay Area in fall 2019; KTVU connects with users on both Tubi and OTT product FLX; KNTV-KSTS launched newscasts for various digital platforms (*The Fast Forward* for KNTV, *Al Momento* for KSTS); and KRON connects with users on the go via its KRONon mobile news product.

“We’ve invested a lot of time and resources into KRONon,” said Jim Rose, KRON VP and general manager, “and it seems to be paying off.”

The Bay Area market is DMA No. 6. Fox owns KTVU and independent KICU, branded on-air as KTVU Plus. ABC holds KGO. CBS owns KPIX and The CW affiliate KBCW. NBCUniversal Local owns NBC-aligned KNTV and Telemundo station KSTS. Nexstar Media Group has MyNetworkTV-affiliated KRON. Univision owns KDTV and KFSF. Stryker possesses independent KOFY.

Comcast is the primary pay TV operator in San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose.

Fox Television Stations acquired KTVU in 2014 and the station is a power. At 6 a.m. in May, KTVU won households and the 25-54 demo. KGO edged out KPIX in the 5 p.m. household race, and KTVU won the demo derby. At 6 p.m. in May, KPIX

nipped KGO in households and KDTV got past KTVU in 25-54. At 11 p.m., KPIX posted a 2.2 in households, ahead of KTVU's 1.9, KGO's 1.8, KNTV's 1.2 and KDTV's 1.0. In the demo race at 11, KTVU had a 0.8, KGO and KDTV a 0.6, KPIX a 0.5 and KNTV a 0.3.

KTVU's 10 p.m. news averaged a 3.6 household rating in May, and 1.8 in the demo. KRON had a 1.0 and a 0.4 at 10.

Lots of News

KTVU-KTVU Plus cranks out 89 hours of news a week, including a 7-8 p.m. newscast on the independent, which offers *Modern Family*, *The Big Bang Theory* and *Seinfeld* during primetime.

“Our news reporting is very direct and covers the community's needs, and our talent is well respected and trusted,” said Mellynda Hartel, senior VP and general manager of the Fox duopoly. “KTVU has a long history of delivering the news without a lot of fluff.”

Frank Somerville, evening anchor at Fox 2, went on leave in early June for health reasons.

Bay Area TV insiders say the race is tightening, and KGO is focused on taking over the top spot. Tom Cibrowski, KGO president and general manager, said ABC7 has some real momentum. “We’re making a run at them,” he said. “Our goal is to be the outright leader in this market.”

The station revamped its beat strategy (see sidebar) to focus on critical issues in the Bay Area, and has found that documentaries work well on the streaming platforms, which include a popular network owned by its parent called Hulu. One documentary, *32 Seconds: A Deadly Night in Rome*, focused on the murder of a police officer in Italy, allegedly by two Bay Area students.

“The longer-form content strategy for OTT has been super successful,” Cibrowski said.

ABC7 launched a 3 p.m. newscast called *Getting Answers* during the pandemic. The station's NextGen Advisory Council brings people 18-24 to the station to give insights on what they want to see from KGO.

Kevin Walsh, president and general

KTVU daytime anchor Mike Mibach is on the story for the local Fox powerhouse in the Bay Area.

manager of KPIX-KBCW, called CBSN San Francisco Bay Area a differentiator for the station. Featuring live streams of KPIX-KBCW's newscasts and additional digital-only newscasts, CBSN San Francisco Bay Area was the fourth CBSN Local product to launch, following CBS-owned stations in New York, Los Angeles and Boston.

"It has really proven valuable in terms of giving consumers a different platform and a different way to find our content," said Walsh. "Giving us the ability to stay on the air 24/7 has been invaluable."

Online Differentiators

KRON's mobile news product launched in February 2019 and initially had a \$2.99 monthly user fee. The charge was scrapped as the pandemic rolled in, and it's now free and ad-supported. KRON cranks out 122½ hours of news per week, for both linear TV and KRONon. A 3 p.m. newscast launched last September.

Jim Rose took over as KRON general manager in mid May. He called the station, which had been an NBC affiliate until 2001, "resurgent."

"The call letters are pervasive in this market — people know the station," he said. "That's a luxury in this day and age."

With Stephanie Adrouny heading up news, KNTV added 5:30 and 7 p.m. newscasts June 7, and moved NBC Nightly

CBS-owned KPIX leads the way in the 11 p.m. ratings, with sports anchor Dennis O'Donnell (l.), news anchors Ken Bastida and Elizabeth Cook and meteorologist Paul Heggen.

News with Lester Holt to 6:30 p.m. from its 5:30 perch. Janelle Wang and Raj Mathai anchor the 5:30 p.m., and Mathai anchors the 7 p.m., which Stacy Owen, president and general manager of KNTV-KSTS, said is "designed to be a two-screen experience" with a strong social component.

Mathai heads to Tokyo to cover the Summer Olympics, his sixth, while Carlos Yustis covers his third Games for KSTS. NBC has that, then the Winter Olympics and Super Bowl in early 2022. "We have the pedal to the metal in the next eight months," Owen said.

The Olympics are "a big part of what we do, and a big differentiator in the market," added Owen, who noted that some new competitions, involving surfing and skateboarding, are well suited for the California lifestyle.

Univision has a full plate of offerings in

the Bay Area, with KDTV and UniMas-affiliated KFSF, along with three radio stations. "You kind of get the whole whammy with us," said Raul Rodriguez, president and general manager of the Univision Bay Area properties.

Rodriguez mentioned three "passion points" for the Hispanic community in the region: news, sport and music, with the Univision properties delivering all three.

"Univision Contigo" (Univision With You) viewer advocacy segments include "Contigo A Salvo", which helps the community stay safe in the ocean. "People pay attention and listen to us," said Rodriguez.

Tourism is a giant economic driver in the Bay Area, and is getting back up to speed after the COVID lockdown. Restaurants are open again. "The market is definitely showing some health," Hartel said.

The GMs speak of a diverse marketplace, overflowing with natural beauty, nightlife and things to do outdoors.

The Bay Area is, of course, home to Silicon Valley and all the big brains figuring out the next killer app, whether it's self-driving cars, social media or something else. "The innovation and the ideas here are pretty incredible," said Cibrowski. "There's no letup to the amount of great ideas, and the amount of smart and dynamic people that live here is incredible too." ●



KGO'S FIVE-SUBJECT NEWSROOM APPROACH

KGO HAS A unique newsroom setup, with reporters and producers clustered around five story subjects. The five-subject setup was hatched a couple years ago under the header Building a Better Bay Area. The beats are health and safety, education, race and social justice, the economy and the changing workplace, and climate and the environment.

"The goal is to get rid of the daybook stuff, the daily churn of spot news," said Tom Cibrowski, president and general manager, KGO. "We're focused on the really big subjects that matter."

The five coverage topics can change over time. Climate and the environment, for example, made the list of five this year, and race and social justice has been a go-to

subject since last year.

"We're focused on finding solutions and providing information on the big problems," said Cibrowski.

The game plan emerged as the Bay Area was, in Cibrowski's words, "coming apart at the seams" amidst astounding population growth. Housing and traffic were two issues that popped out as more and more people arrived.

Reaction from viewers to the beat approach has been positive. Cibrowski said the five-bucket setup has resonated with younger



viewers in particular. "They want perspective, context, someone who says, how are we going to fix this and who is my ally?" he said. "They want someone to say, how can I take action?" — MM

Live Audiences Slow to Return

Production unions still figuring out guidance as variants surge but vaccinations continue



By Paige Albiniak
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When the pandemic shut down all in-studio production in March 2020,

live studio audiences also, by necessity, went away. While most shows returned to their studios last September with skeleton crews, audiences have not yet come back except in a few instances.

New York City allowed audiences to return starting June 1, but most syndicated shows were out of production for the season by then. Los Angeles, hard hit by COVID-19 as well, has also been careful about allowing groups of people to convene. Production across the country is governed by an agreement hammered out last September between the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP), representing major studios, networks and streamers, and the Directors Guild of America, IATSE, SAG-AFTRA, the Teamsters and Basic Crafts.

Debmarm-Mercury's Wendy Williams, produced in New York City, is one show to which live audiences — albeit smaller ones — have returned. The show started by seating an audience in its New York studio at about one-third capacity, or 40 people. As of July 1, the show was seating about 90 people per taping, up to 75% capacity, and producers hope to return to 100% capacity — as long as union and public-health guidelines allow for it — before Wendy Williams concludes production for the season in mid-July.



"Wendy has very devoted fans, which speaks to her popularity in New York," Lonnie Burstein, executive VP, programming and production, Debmar-Mercury, said. "We didn't anticipate problems and so far we haven't had any."

Vaccinated Crowd, Crew

Fans wanting to attend the show make their requests through the show's website. They are asked to show proof of vaccination and identification upon their arrival. Everyone on the show's staff and crew is vaccinated, as are guests and Williams herself. The show also has provided on-site testing and remote testing capabilities through a third party since it returned to the studio. Throughout the past year, staff was being tested as often as three times a week. Finally, the

Tapings of New York-based Wendy Williams were at 75% by July 1, with hopes of going to full capacity before production of the season concludes.

show's staff, crew and any audience members, while vaccinated, continue to wear masks as per union guidelines.

"I'm very proud of Wendy's below-the-line staff, they did a tremendous job," Burstein said. "We didn't have to shut down one day."

Fox also is the only group that is preparing to premiere not one, but two new shows this fall: Debmar-Mercury's Nick Cannon and its own *You Bet Your Life*, starring Jay Leno. Fox was also the launch group for Wendy Williams, which airs on its stations in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago.

Debmarm-Mercury intends to produce Nick Cannon in front of a full live audience, as long as union and public-health guidelines permit, at the show's production studio at 106th Street and



These hosts feed off of their audiences, especially someone comedic like Nick [Cannon]. In a way, it turned out to be a blessing that we didn't have to launch and air a whole year during the pandemic.

— **Lonnie Burstein**, executive VP, programming and production, Debmar-Mercury

Park Avenue in Harlem. Meanwhile, *You Bet Your Life* will be produced in Los Angeles in front of a smaller audience of 60 people or so. All potential audience members are asked to show proof of vaccination.

Nick Cannon, which was supposed to debut on TV stations across the country in fall 2020 but was delayed, will premiere in September. Three days of the show each week will be produced live while two will be produced on the day prior to airing, keeping it very current. The show will produce 170 original episodes, taking *Nick Cannon* all the way into next July with fresh content.

"These hosts feed off of their audiences, especially someone comedic like Nick," Burstein said. "In a way, it turned out to be a blessing that we didn't have to launch and air a whole year during the pandemic."

You Bet Your Life starts production at the end of July and intends to complete the year's production by the end of October.

Meanwhile, another Fox-produced game show, *25 Words or Less*, will continue to be produced without an audience this year, Stephen Brown, executive VP, programming and development, Fox Television Stations, said.

Finally, Fox will premiere a test run of *Pictionary*, hosted by Jerry O'Connell and based on the popular drawing game, on July 12. That show is following

You Bet Your Life with Jay Leno (l.) will originate from Los Angeles before a smaller audience of about 60. Talker Nick Cannon (r.), delayed for a year, will start production in September.

COVID guidelines for crew and talent, although it does not have an audience. All 20 episodes of the four-week test were taped over a week in June. *Pictionary* is being distributed by CBS Media Ventures and airing on select Fox-owned stations. If it performs well in the test, CBS will plan to take it national next fall with potentially both Fox- and CBS-owned stations on board.

"What we're finding is that game resonates really well with the audience. We anticipate that *You Bet Your Life* is going to do well and doubling down on game is a good strategy for us. It's an appealing production model and it's a good utility player for the

stations," Brown said. "Games are a half hour and stations can double-run them or put them into a block of games. They fit everywhere on a station's schedule."

In addition, the game shows that air on Fox-owned stations — from the syndication-leading *Family Feud*, starring Steve Harvey and produced by Fremantle, to *25 Words or Less* and now *You Bet Your Life* and *Pictionary* — all have a comedic element, allowing them to replace increasingly scarce off-network sitcoms at much lower production costs and license fees.

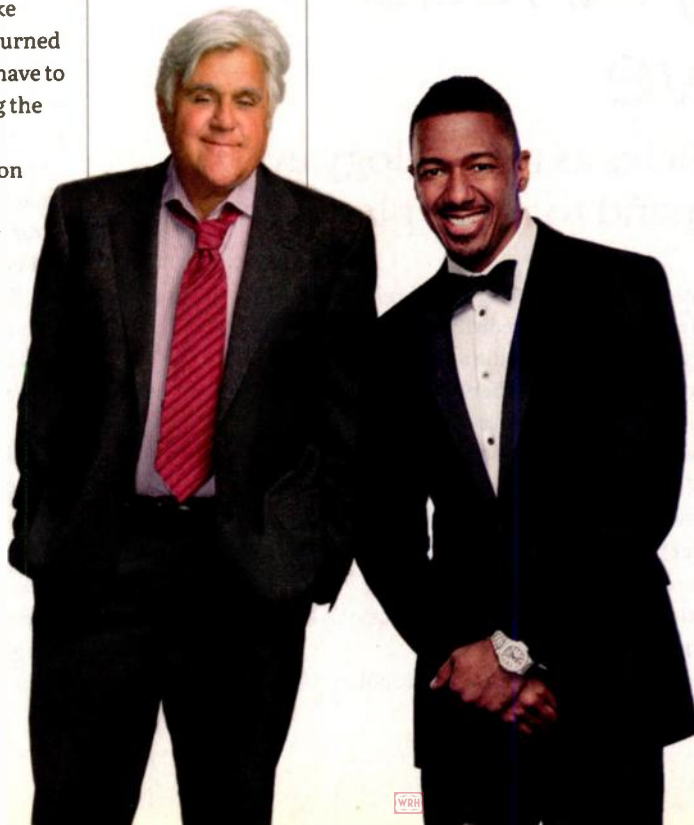
"I can see us doing a game every year," Brown said. "If you look at the way we do game, humor is the driver."

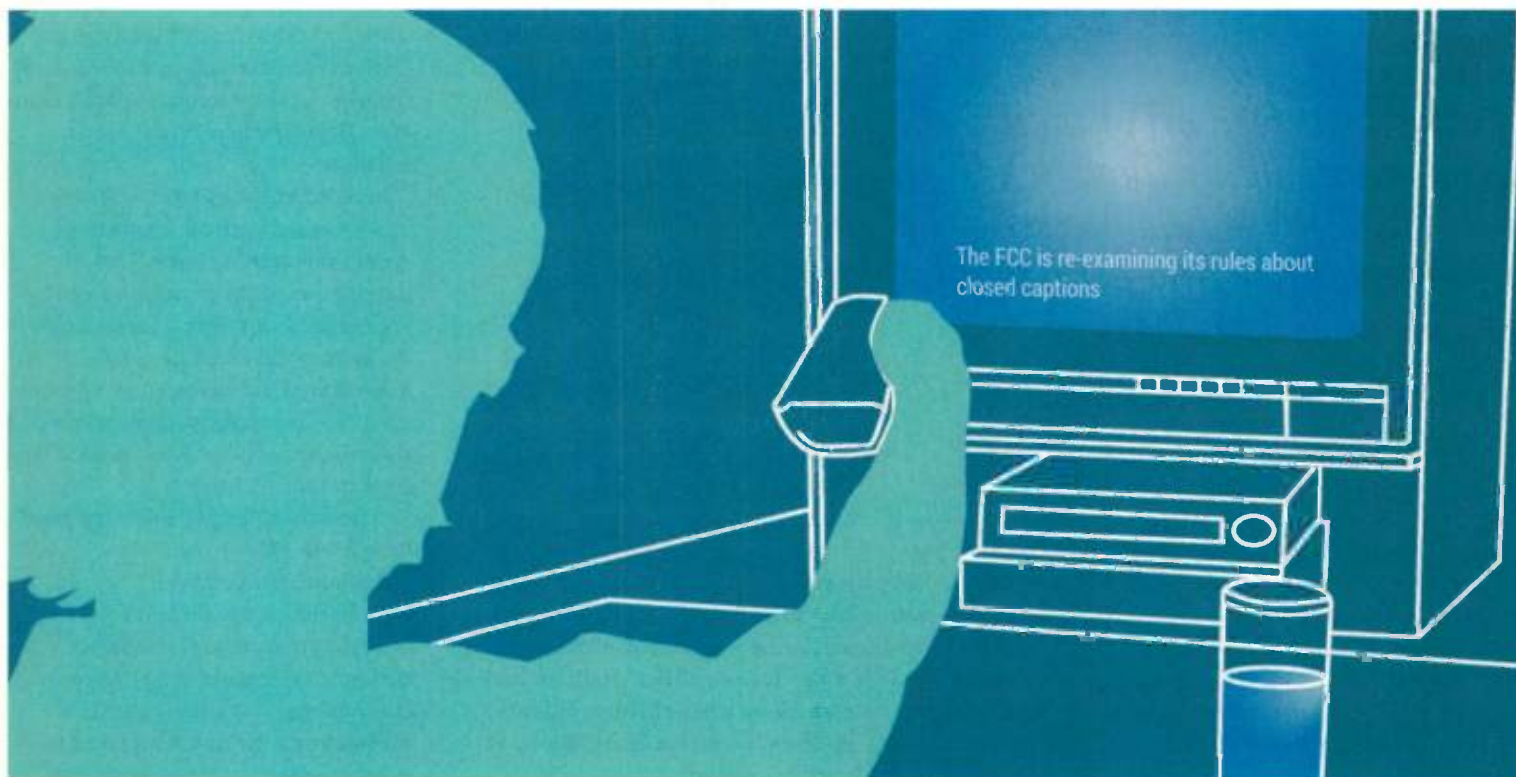
As for the many talk shows that are typically produced in front of a live audience, their plans are not yet clear. On Thursday, July 1, the unions that oversee production were supposed to release revised pandemic production guidelines, but they are delaying that guidance until they can conclude talks. Talks are scheduled to resume on July 6 after the long Independence Day weekend.

Variants Throw a Curve

The evolution of COVID-19 variants, such as the prevalent delta variant that is surging in some parts of the U.S. and around the world, is making providing said guidance tricky. While the U.S.-based Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization continue to assert that the approved vaccines provide strong protection against variants, there still have been breakthrough cases. Los Angeles County recently encouraged everyone — whether vaccinated or not — to return to wearing masks when indoors with groups of people, after having lifted that guidance just two weeks prior.

Currently, nearly 48% of the U.S. is vaccinated, and the U.S. is leading the world in virus mitigation. The delta variant accounts for nearly 50% of new COVID-19 cases in the U.S., according to the CDC. ●





Keeping Closed Captioning Ahead Of the Curve

FCC seeks to update policies as technology evolves and assistive services expand to more platforms



By Gary Arlen
@garyarlen

Closed captioning is not just for the hearing impaired, which may be a major reason behind the Federal Communications Commission's current re-examination of its decade-old rules for captioning and related assistive services.

About 80% of viewers who use

captions — on all platforms — are not hearing impaired, according to a survey by Publicis Media and Verizon Media. A similar number of respondents said they are more likely to watch an entire video when captions are available. Analysts have pointed to a variety of reasons for the growing use of captions, ranging from mumbling actors to Surround Sound audio mixing, when the background music overwhelms spoken dialogue.

Lise Hamlin, director of public policy

Opposite page:
Lise Hamlin,
director of public
policy, Hearing
Loss Association of
America

at the Hearing Loss Association of America, said the group constantly hears "from people with a milder loss, or an untreated or even unrecognized loss, who look to captions when speakers have heavy foreign accents or ... when there is interfering sound."

"In one case, someone who had no recognized hearing loss told me he watched *The Sopranos* with the captions on because it sometimes telegraphed what he should be paying attention to — for example, if a sound was off camera or a bush was rustling," she recalled.

Anecdotally, many viewers cite the need for captions in order to understand the pronunciation in British dramas.

Big Players Seek Automated Options

Whatever the reasons, closed captions and the rules governing them are drawing attention, especially as more big providers, such as IBM and Google, bring advanced, automated technology to the service and as hearing-impaired

viewers demand captioning capabilities on streaming platforms (including Zoom and other video calling services), as well as on broadcast and cable channels.

Part of captioning's popularity stems from increased viewing in public venues, whether on a mobile device or in open settings such as bars, restaurants, health clubs, airports or other venues that are being repopulated in post-pandemic times. The Publicis study found 69% of people watched video with the sound off when in public areas.

In April, the FCC set a vague agenda for a wide-ranging update of the 2010 Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) in a process that involves three FCC bureaus (Consumer and Governmental Affairs, Media and Wireless Telecommunications). The deadline for comments has been extended a few times, with public and industry input due during June and July. (Highlights of the comments will appear in part two of this report in the August B+C/Multichannel News.)

The FCC's examination also seeks to update February 2014 rules that mandate quality standards such as accuracy, timing, completeness and placement for captioning. The public notice emerged about a month after nine organizations representing hearing- and sight-impaired groups met with acting FCC chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel and her staff.

In its ex parte description of that meeting, which they called "Accessibility Priorities for New Commission Leadership," the group said it wants the FCC to issue guidance and metrics for automatic speech recognition (ASR) for video programming, expanded audio description capabilities, increased accessibility for advanced communications services and clarified standards for the transition to ASR-based captions.

The FCC "played a leading role in convening conversations with industry leaders and consumers, developing substantive policy and



"Captioning has been our lifeline to connect with others, to enjoy entertainment, to keep our jobs, to get access to live saving emergency information from our governors or local leaders."

— **Lise Hamlin**, director of public policy, Hearing Loss Association of America

rules around accessibility," the group pointed out, asking the commission "to reassert its leadership and re-energize the CVAA."

Is Caption Quality Declining?

The hearing- and sight-impaired group emphasized that "consumers are reporting a decrease in the quality of closed captions as ASR begins to replace human captioners for live programming."

"Captions generated by machine often miss context and leave out critical information," they said. "Members of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community have specifically complained about captioning during major live televised events such as the Super Bowl, the presidential inauguration and COVID-19 press briefings" — emphasizing that viewers of different networks saw "varying levels of quality."

"This oversight is pertinent as broadcasters continue to rely more frequently on ASR for live programming," the advocates contended. Setting the stage for an examination of audio description processes, the group said: "Over the next four years, audio description will be required in markets reaching approximately 87% of broadcast television consumers, though that still means there are 13% of people without access."

They also encouraged "expansion of audio description in non-English languages" and requiring captions on internet programming.

Moreover, they complained, "Streaming services are currently not covered under commission description rules ... [hence] many streaming apps that are not native to the video hardware are inaccessible."

HLAA's Hamlin emphasized, "Captioning is hugely important to people with hearing loss, whatever platform it appears on: broadcast television, cable, movies and now over the internet, on our smartphones, when using telehealth or video conferencing platforms at work or to simply chat with friends and family." During the pandemic, she said, "captioning has been our lifeline to connect with others, to enjoy entertainment, to keep our jobs, to get access to live saving emergency information from our governors or local leaders."

"Captions must be accurate and usable," HLAA's Hamlin insisted.

Captions Have Been Here Awhile

Captions have been part of American television since the 1970s, starting with use on shows such as ABC's *The Mod Squad* and PBS's *The French Chef*. The FCC has kept an eye on captioning technology for nearly four decades.

Until the passage of the Television Decoder Circuitry Act in 1990 — which required that all new TV receivers built after July 1993 include built-in capability and that all broadcasters transmit closed captions in Line 21 of the analog Vertical Blanking Interval — captioning was handled via a set-top box. The 1996 Telecommunications Act expanded the law to include captioning receivers in all digital TV sets as of 2002. Program distributors have had to carry closed captions for Spanish-language video programming since January 2010. In 2010, the CVAA expanded the requirement to include TV shows distributed via the internet.



Under current rules, all programs must include English or Spanish captions, with exceptions for new networks, networks with less than \$3 million in revenue, certain local programs or in cases where networks would have to spend more than 2% of their income on such captioning. There are also hardship waivers.

It is unclear whether the FCC seeks to override local mandates for captioning, such as the one adopted in Seattle two years ago. The city council enacted a law in 2019 to require bars, restaurants, gyms, stadiums and other places of public accommodation to activate captions on their television sets during business hours.

When it issued the call for input to the current public notice, the FCC conceded that many of the captioning rules “have not been revisited ... some since initial adoption.”

“Given changes in technology and industry practices, as well as taking into account consumer experiences, we seek comment on whether there is a need to update these rules,” the FCC said. It said the exploration to update the 2010 CVAA will include audio description, closed captioning of internet protocol-delivered video programming, accessible emergency information and accessible user interfaces plus video programming guides and menus.

The agency also invited suggestions about “other initiatives the commission could undertake to improve access to video programming and communications services.”

Among the topics that the FCC could explore is another problem of automated captioning. Some stations for newscasts and other live programs create captions directly from teleprompter scripts. But critics contend such captions have “as low as zero percent accuracy,” with spoken dialogue not matching the displayed words. They cite the problems of a scripted teleprompter during a weather broadcast when conditions are changing rapidly and the on-screen text could put

[Paid subscription channels] have significant viewership but are not subject to the same requirements as non-paid subscription channels.

— **Mark A. Riccobono**, president, National Federation for the Blind

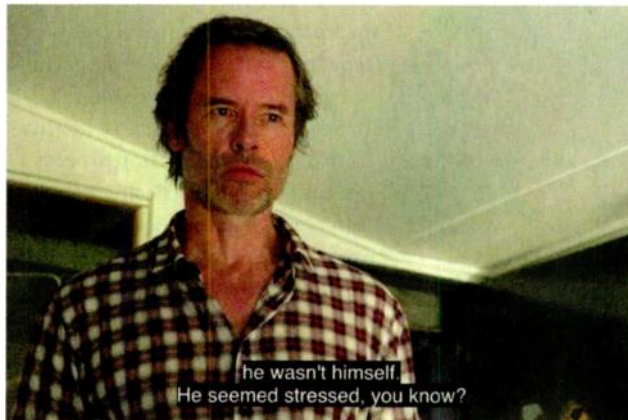
hearing-impaired viewers in danger if they see outdated information.

Academic research, such as a report on “Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences,” has confirmed the value of captioning as a visual reinforcement for audio tracks that help children learn and support foreign-language speakers and other non-disabled viewers in improving their comprehension of video programming. Another U.K. study found that watching captioned films can help viewers learn foreign languages.

Improving Audio Descriptions, Too

The National Federation of the Blind used the FCC comments procedure to encourage the agency to include audio description requirements as part of its current CVAA update, citing the growth of online streaming services that “outpace the current accessibility

Many viewers cite the need for captions to understand the accents in shows like Australian import *Jack Irish*, the third season of which starts on Acorn TV July 12.



requirements of the law.” In particular, the NFB said Audio Description of Video Programming rules should extend to channels such as Netflix and HBO.

NFB president Mark A. Riccobono pointed out that paid subscription channels such as HBO, Disney Plus and others “have significant viewership but are not subject to the same requirements as non-paid subscription channels” such as broadcast and cable channels. He also cites examples of multichannel video programming distributors that carry multiple secondary audio programming (SAP) services for Spanish-language simulcasts but not audio descriptions that would be of use to sight-impaired audiences.

“An example of this is *WWE Raw*, which airs on the USA Network and has audio description, but is often only available with a Spanish simulcast because Spanish is considered more important to viewership by the network,” Riccobono said.

The NFB also wants the FCC to add requirements that streaming services and subscription channels must purchase the audio-described content when they buy the rights to distribute film and television programming from producers and distributors. Riccobono points to two examples of existing shows being sold for distribution without existing audio descriptions.

“*Friends* originally aired on NBC, complete with audio description,” he said. “However, when Netflix, and eventually HBO, purchased the series distribution rights, audio description was not, and is still not, available.” Similarly, the 2015 feature film *The Hateful Eight* included audio description for the theatrical release, but “now that the movie is available on Apple TV, Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, the audio description is not included.”

The NFB also asked the FCC to add a rule that would create audio description quality standards, citing a 2020 agency plan to comply with Disability Advisory Committee proposals. ●

As a son of a gay mother, Ben Silverman and his Propagate Content family care deeply about the issues affecting the LGBTQ+ community and how their stories are represented, crafted, and told onscreen. We are thrilled to have a partner in the CW where our storylines are always supported and encouraged by Mark Pedowitz and the entire CW team.

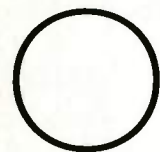
PROPAGATE

Premion Shows Station Groups Way to Over-The-Top Revenue

Tegna, Gamut provide local on-ramp to advanced advertising



By Jon Lafayette
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@jlafayette



Over-the-top advertising has become a surprisingly important business for companies that have been stockpiling local television stations.

Early in his remarks about Tegna's success as a "pure-play broadcasting company," CEO Dave Lougee gushed about the growth of Premion.

"Premion, our first-to-market over-the-top advertising platform, has continued to evolve and expand to best serve the needs of regional and local advertisers," Lougee said. He said Tegna was increasing its 2021 outlook for Premion, forecasting a 45% to 50% increase in revenue over 2020.

OTT advertising is more than a growing source of revenue for station groups following a COVID-caused recession from which the local ad market is still recovering. Streaming revenue is letting broadcasters, including Cox Media Group, Sinclair Broadcast Group and the NBC- and Fox-owned and operated stations, claim a foothold in the technology field and create advanced advertising products for clients enamored with digital and social media.

A Way to Offer Advanced TV Ads

"OTT is a way to get to the future," said Steve Pruett, executive chairman of Cox

Media Group, whose OTT advertising company is Gamut. "It's a way to move advertisers and our viewers into advanced TV."

Even more opportunities for advanced advertising will be available as local stations transition to the ATSC 3.0 NextGen TV format.

Premion and Gamut offer local clients the advantages of digital advertising, such as better targeting by geography, demographics or purchase behavior, which are difficult for broadcasters using current technology. Adding OTT and CTV advertising to a campaign can also help advertisers grow reach, a crucial aspect for marketers.

Locally targeted OTT ad spending will total \$1.13 billion in 2021, per BIA Advisory Services estimates, up 19%. For 2022, BIA has forecasted another 49% jump to \$1.64 billion.

On top of that, getting into the over-the-top space transforms broadcasters from old media Luddites into high-tech whizzes, which makes them more attractive to Wall Street and their investors.

Daniel Kurnos, analyst at the Benchmark Co., called Premion a big part of Tegna's future, its OTT strategy and its ad-stack development.

"It's also a potentially growing piece of Tegna's own valuation," Kurnos said. "Remember that Premion is currently all local inventory, though, so it's differentiated. I would also argue that they did it first, so they have a nice first-mover advantage, and Gray has invested

CEO Dave Lougee has cited Premion's growth in touting Tegna's success as a "pure-play broadcasting company."

in the platform as well, which gives them nearly full-country coverage, especially once the Meredith transaction closes." (Gray agreed to purchase Meredith's 17 local TV stations in June.)

Tegna agreed to sell a stake in Premion to Gray Television in February 2020.

Gray president and co-CEO Pat LaPlatney said the broadcaster was looking to form a commercial relationship with Premion when it decided to invest instead.

"There's significant demand for digital video and in doing our homework, we decided Premion was the best," LaPlatney said.

Unlike other tech or digital businesses Gray could have invested in, Premion is generating real money.

"The business of selling digital video impressions is really, really strong," LaPlatney said. "I would guess that it's far and away the strongest piece of the media ecosystem right now. And so we're happy to have a very good product set in that world and happy to have some equity in a company that we feel is the best."

Wells Fargo media analyst Steven Cahall in May noted that Premion "supercharges" Tegna's ad revenue growth.

Cahall estimated Premion would have sales of \$215 million for 2021, including more than \$50 million in the second quarter. That would be about 15% of the \$1.4 billion in advertising and marketing services revenue he expects Premion to generate this year.

"We're in a similar growth trajectory here at Gamut," said Soo Jin Oh, president at Gamut. She expects to see more growth because many digital advertisers are starting to shift dollars into OTT.

Tom Cox has been president of Premion since early 2020, but he was one of the business development executives at Tegna when Premion was created.

"We have a variety of strategic initiatives we look at on a regular basis, and identified that dollars were moving from a variety of different buckets into OTT and streaming advertising, and realized we had some pretty unique assets given the strength of our local



stations," Cox recalled. "We started the business in 2016 and never looked back."

Cox said the pandemic was a factor in Premion's growth, accelerating consumers' move to streaming by three to five years. "I believe, as TV viewers continue to suffer subscription fatigue and option overload, we should anticipate the growth in AVOD [ad-supported VOD] to continue," he said.

Advertisers Like It

Over-the-top TV and connected TV are popular with advertisers because they combine the targeting and performance metrics available with digital advertising with the lean-back experience for viewers. Advertisers also can reach viewers who have cut the cord or simply don't watch traditional TV.

With its head start, Premion was able to develop scale, which it has used to invest in the business.

CTV advertising commands a high price, and that has attracted fraud. Premion offers security by working directly with inventory providers rather than working through open exchanges. Among its inventory partners are Discovery, Fox and A+E Networks.

"We focused on creating an inventory product that looks very similar to a replacement for the traditional cable model," Cox said. Premion's product was a good fit for Tegna because, like TV advertising, the messages show up "on the same piece of glass, in the same type of programming. It's just delivered differently."

Between the Tegna stations and the Gray stations, Premion has "feet on the street" in markets representing about 75% of U.S. households, Cox said.

Premion has developed a set of fairly robust sales rules designed to separate the local clients pursued by Tegna and Gray station ad-sales teams from national clients looking to activate locally, targeted by Premion's sales force.

"It took us a while to figure out how best to codify those roles," Cox said. "But now that they are in place, it works seamlessly across the groups and the level of sales-channel conflict

Premion president Tom Cox said the pandemic sped up viewers' move to streaming by some three to five years.

that we experience is considerably less than even a year and a half ago."

Cox said Premion's business is built around providing the best inventory, the best customer experience, by integrating with agency and client buying systems, and the best results. Those results are being quantified through deals with a number of data and analytics providers.

Premion recently signed up with TVSquared, which helps provide crossplatform, closed-loop measurement and attribution for local linear and OTT campaigns.

Tegna Attribution is working with IHS Markit to employ Polk data to identify the most valuable targets for auto advertising and connect Tegna and Premion campaign performance to dealer sales.

Tegna Attribution also has an arrangement with Arrivalist, a travel-and-tourism intelligence company, to help measure how many people arrive at various destinations, where they came from and how long they stayed.

While it works with the TV stations, Cox said, "the Premion business is focused on OTT and CTV. There are a number of other competitors in the space that offer a panoply of digital marketing services. That's not what Premion is. Premion is entirely focused on OTT and CTV and I think that singular focus allows us to really execute and drive that business."

Competition Will Come

But with OTT advertising growing so fast, competition is inevitable.

Apollo Management Group in April agreed to acquire Verizon Media, whose assets include both digital content and ad tech. There will be ways Verizon Media will be able to work with Cox Media Group and Gamut.

CMG's Pruett couldn't comment on what synergies might exist between Verizon Media and CMG, because the deal hasn't yet cleared regulatory review and closed. "What I can tell you is that Apollo strongly encourages their portfolio companies to find synergies and to work together," he said. "So you know that is an Apollo desire." ●

HOW GAMUT GOT OTT RESULTS

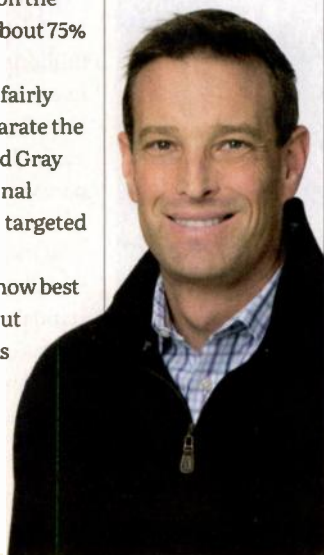
GAMUT PROVIDED a couple of case studies of how its OTT campaigns work in local markets.

CEO Soo Jin Oh said "measurement is a sweet spot" at Gamut.

"Any client that buys with us gets off-the-shelf measurement, whether it's incrementality or things like store visitation rates or purchases," she said. "OTT advertisers are looking for more measurement that helps them understand the return on investment."

A pet-supply advertiser wanted to extend reach beyond linear TV. Gamut's campaign targeted pet owners ages 25-54 in a local market and was optimized to reach unique viewers without oversaturating the audience. The result was that 69% of Gamut's campaign was seen by consumers who can't be reached with linear ads, according to data coming from Gamut's partnership with iSpot.

Another campaign for a retailer aimed to increase web traffic among adults 25-54. Gamut used premium, brand-safe inventory and engaged CubeliQ and Comscore to measure the results. The campaign increased web traffic by 258%. Consumers were 12.7% less likely to visit competitors' websites directly and 20.3% more likely to search for items the retailer sold. — JL



Cable Wireless Grows Up

Analysts, companies optimistic as subscriber rolls rise; no longer a drain on business



By Mike Farrell
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Cable wireless service is growing into its own. In the four years since Comcast pulled the trigger on what was to be the fourth attempt by a cable company to crack the wireless nut, Xfinity Mobile has been a growth engine, accumulating 3.9 million customers since April 2017. In the first quarter of this year, Xfinity Mobile achieved cash flow break-even, setting the wireless business on a course well beyond the early notion that it would be a backup to plans from more established carriers. Analysts and executives alike are taking notice, predicting that wireless could be a strong competitor in the market, especially if paired with broadband.

“Cable wireless is ready for its star turn,” MoffettNathanson principal and senior analyst Craig Moffett wrote in a research note. Moffett, whose earlier take was that cable wireless is more of a retention tool for other services, now sees the product as a potential profit center.

Comcast is currently the cable industry’s largest wireless provider and Moffett expects its lead to grow over the next four years. Moffett expects Xfinity Mobile to be close to breakeven in 2021, generating about \$12 million in negative cash flow, and to turn profitable in 2022.

Aggressive Pricing a Plus

Moffett’s enthusiasm comes primarily from Comcast’s decision earlier this year to aggressively price wireless service. Comcast now substantially undercuts Verizon Communications and AT&T for unlimited mobile data across all plan sizes, according to Moffett, making the product

competitive for a vastly larger portion of the market.

Charter Communications followed Comcast, launching Spectrum Mobile wireless service in June 2018. That offering also is flirting with profitability, but chief financial officer Christopher Winfrey said Charter is more concerned with adding subscribers.

“Our goal isn’t to drive short-term EBITDA profitability,” Winfrey said on Charter’s Q1 earnings call. “Our goal is to drive as much growth as we can, because we know what the underlying profitability is and what it does for the overall business.”

Spectrum added about 300,000 wireless lines in Q1, raising the total to about 2.7 million subscribers.

Moffett estimated Charter’s mobile service would be profitable by 2024 as capital expenses decline.

Charter said its wireless business is finally hitting stride, fueled by competitive pricing, reliable service and the ability to bundle mobile with broadband.

According to researcher Parks Associates, about 19% of U.S. broadband households bundled high-speed data with wireless in Q1 2021. That’s up from about

Comcast’s Xfinity Mobile has signed up 3.9 million customers since its April 2017 launch.

15% in Q1 2020. With the number of broadband-only homes on the rise — Parks said 41% of households now take unbundled, standalone broadband service, up from 33% in 2018 — the opportunity to sell mobile service to those households is increasing.

At the JP Morgan Media & Communications conference in late May, Winfrey suggested wireless customers could eventually number about half the level of broadband subscribers, currently at 29.2 million.

“I don’t think people took us seriously when we came into the voice market,” Winfrey said, adding that today, Comcast and Charter are the largest wireline phone service providers in the country. “And the way we did it is, because we weren’t the incumbent, we had the ability to save customers money, we had the ability to bundle it, and as a result we took down phone pricing dramatically across the entire industry and the entire U.S.

“Over 20 years, we became the largest operators,” Winfrey continued. “At its peak, you could almost count as clockwork that voice subscribers would be about half of broadband and if it hadn’t been for mobile substitution, those numbers were continuing to increase. I think our opportunity is at least that.”

Charter has been growing broadband at a 7% annual rate over the past three years and its wireless customers have doubled over the past two years. Continuing that pace, the wireless segment would reach about 15 million customers by mid-2023.

That might be a bit optimistic, as Moffett predicted Charter would reach 7.2 million wireless customers by 2025. But many analysts anticipate Charter will add about 1.1 million mobile customers annually over the next few years. That pace would lead to nearly 15 million wireless customers by 2030.

At the JP Morgan conference, Winfrey said Charter does not view wireless as a standalone product but rather as an extension of broadband service. He said all Spectrum sales channels are required to sell wireless with other products.



While Charter won't commit to a date when the wireless business will be profitable, Altice USA, which launched Altice Mobile service in September 2019 under a very aggressive pricing structure (\$20 per, line per month for unlimited service for life), has since revamped that pricing. At the Credit Suisse conference, Altice USA chief financial officer Michael Grau said after a brief hiccup mainly around onboarding issues, the mobile product was beginning to hit stride in 2020 when the pandemic halted growth because retail stores shut down. The hiatus also forced Altice USA to take a hard look at the wireless business's gross profit and churn metrics.

Altice Rethinks Pricing

"In the latter half of 2020, we offered 1 [Gigabyte] and 3 [GB] plans to supplement our unlimited plans, and we did right-size some of our pricing," Grau said. "We're starting to solve the gross profit problem; we're no longer taking on customers that are generating negative gross profits."

Altice USA now offers 1 GB data plans for \$14 per month, 3GB data plans for \$22 per month and unlimited data plans for \$45 per month.

Grau said take rates on the 1 GB and 3 GB products are between 60% and 70%, an encouraging sign. The new pricing also has helped dramatically reduce churn, he said.

According to MoffettNathanson, Altice Mobile improved churn by 20% to 30% as it moved traffic to T-Mobile's network in Q4.

"At the same time a lot of our stores are reopening," Grau said. "I think we're very close to getting to the point where we're saying, 'I'm comfortable with the gross profit, I think we've solved for that; I'm comfortable with churn, I think we've solved for that.' And that's when we'll turn up the sales and marketing machine again. I think you'll see that somewhere in the back half of 2021."

Because of a late start, Grau said the mobile unit probably won't see break-even this year.

"We'd like to see it break-even on a run-rate basis as we exit 2022," Grau said. "I think that's more realistic."

AIR SUPERIORITY

At the current pace, MoffettNathanson estimates the top three publicly traded cable wireless service providers will combine for more than 15 million subscribers by 2025.

(in thousands)	2021E	2022E	2023E	2024E	2025E
XFINITY MOBILE	3,993	4,983	5,873	6,843	7,893
SPECTRUM MOBILE	3,502	4,594	5,566	6,444	7,244
ALTICE MOBILE	207	257	308	357	415
TOTAL	7,702	9,834	11,747	13,635	15,552

SOURCE: Company reports, MoffettNathanson estimates

MOBILE REVS UP

MoffettNathanson estimates combined mobile revenue will more than double for the top three publicly traded cable companies over the next four years.

(in thousands)	2021E	2022E	2023E	2024E	2025E
XFINITY MOBILE	\$2,305	\$2,998	\$3,671	\$4,401	\$5,121
SPECTRUM MOBILE	\$2,114	\$2,661	\$3,220	\$3,740	\$4,233
ALTICE MOBILE	\$102	\$137	\$165	\$195	\$227
TOTAL	\$4,521	\$5,796	\$7,056	\$8,336	\$9,581

SOURCE: Company reports, MoffettNathanson estimates

While cable wireless continues to hum along, one potential competitor — Dish Network's Dish Wireless — lurks in the wings. With plans to launch the first market, Las Vegas, in the third quarter, Dish appears to be moving forward with plans for the state-of-the-art 5G wireless network, despite Wall Street skepticism.

Dish appears to be branding the wireless offering under the "Project Gene5is" name, launching a website under that moniker in June that appears mostly to be a vehicle to gauge interest beyond Las Vegas. The website, which Dish confirmed as its own, promises to notify those who leave an email address and ZIP code when service will be available in their area. A Dish spokesperson confirmed Project Gene5is is from the company but declined further comment.

"We'll be communicating to customers

as options are available in their area, with Vegas being our first market," a Dish spokesperson said.

Dish has until June 2023 to make the service available to about 70% of its footprint under a federal mandate. Over the years, pundits have criticized the offering, which Dish has said it can build for about \$10 billion, on everything from time to market (too late) to expected cost (too little).

Dish Plans Draw Skeptics

JP Morgan media analyst Philip Cusick was the latest analyst to cast aspersions on Dish wireless plans, downgrading the stock to "underweight" from "neutral" while raising his 12 month price target to \$45 per share from \$38.

"We can't find a way but to be skeptical on the Dish story," Cusick wrote. He said while he has the highest respect for Dish chairman Charlie Ergen and the company, he remains stymied by three major issues: the inherent difficulty in launching a brand new wireless service, Dish's spectrum disadvantage and the perception the company is too late to the 5G game.

Cusick noted the history of service and quality issues that have plagued wireless newcomers including Sprint, Leap Wireless and MetroPCS.

"Many times these were not issues of money to spend or desire, but simply that getting on the right cell sites can be very hard in areas and take years, if they are even possible," Cusick wrote. While he noted that Dish has a leg up on previous new carriers by owning low-band spectrum and having a MVNO deal with T-Mobile, those aspects only reduce the challenge.

Dish, according to Cusick, has about 114 Megahertz of spectrum, far less than its competition. While Dish could buy more licenses in future federal spectrum auctions, Cusick doesn't believe the company has the money now. Finally, Cusick stated that he worries that Dish missed the boat on 5G, adding that other larger carriers that have already rolled out the technology will accelerate those plans and erase any differentiation Dish would have had by coming to market sooner. ●

Streaming Paves a Path For Addressable Ads

Invidi launches two initiatives that would ramp up personalization



By Alan Wolk
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@awolk

While addressable TV advertising—the notion of being able to send specific spots to individual viewers depending on their demographics—is becoming more popular than ever, much of that popularity is tied to the rise of streaming.

Streaming, by its nature, is built for addressability. With the exception of some linear-like channels on the free ad-supported streaming TV platforms (FASTs), it is almost exclusively on-demand.

Linear, though, is a different story.

The U.S. has had a linear addressable market for some time, led by satellite-TV providers Dish Network and DirecTV (now AT&T), which had national audiences and the right software in their set top boxes to allow linear addressable to happen.

While advertisers liked the Dish and DirecTV solutions, the satellite providers did not have the scale to make linear addressable anything more than a niche solution.

Project OAR and Nielsen's linear addressable solutions set out to rectify the scale issue by allowing for addressable overlays on smart TVs, regardless of which provider the viewer was subscribed to.

Ready to Scale Up

Now the addressable universe is poised to gain even more scale.

Invidi, long a powerhouse in this space, has recently launched two initiatives that hold great promise for increasing the scale

and scope of linear addressable.

The first is a collaboration with middleware provider Irdeto to create a solution that allows set-top boxes running on Irdeto to deliver addressable ads. This opens up the addressable linear market around the world, especially in Europe, where Irdeto has a sizable footprint.

Just as important, it allows for all distributors—cable, satellite, telco as well as broadcasters and operators (pretty much anyone with a set top box)—to offer an easy and complete linear addressable solution, one that agencies and brands should find much easier to buy at scale, as it eliminates any concerns about compatibility across distributors.

The Irdeto deal builds on the momentum of recent news that Invidi has been certified by Project OAR (Open Addressable Ready) to deliver addressable ads from WarnerMedia via Vizio smart TVs.

Project OAR uses smart TV's ability to recognize what programming the (opted-in) viewer is watching and then deliver a more targeted spot as an overlay. For networks, it's a way to sell and deliver addressable spots directly, without having to go through the multichannel video programming distributors (MVPDs).

Scale is the big takeaway here too: Invidi

Project OAR has certified Invidi to deliver addressable ads from WarnerMedia properties like TNT to Vizio smart TVs. (Pictured: TNT's *Snowpiercer*.)

is now able to deliver WarnerMedia's addressable ads across not just Vizio TVs, but across Verizon, Dish and DirecTV set-top boxes as well. By increasing the size of the potential audience, the deal makes it easier for buyers to justify running addressable ads on WarnerMedia's networks as they can reach a larger audience across both set-top boxes and smart TVs.

The goal is to expand this arrangement to other networks and other set-top boxes and OEMs so that the linear addressable buys can easily be made across a much larger potential audience. This will be key as the shift to streaming will not happen overnight and brands will need to continue to have a strong presence on linear for the next five to ten years.

Two Definitions Of Addressable

While addressable advertising is indeed hot right now, we're also seeing the development of two somewhat different definitions of what addressable actually means. For many brands, "addressable" involves bringing in either their own first-party data (e.g., their loyalty program members) or buying that sort of data from a third party and then targeting ads to only run against that audience.

That setup is in line with how digital advertising is sold and for a long time has been the primary way that linear addressable was sold too.

But as viewers are shifting from linear to streaming, an alternate definition has cropped up where, rather than buying against a specific target, brands are buying against the same Nielsen demo they're targeting on traditional linear (e.g., women 18 to 49) as a way of extending reach.

These buys are mostly being made on streaming, as brands use streaming as a way of extending reach, hitting audiences they are missing on linear, while still casting a fairly broad net. Because the ads are not going to the entire audience, they are frequently called "addressable" as well, though it seems clear that a new term is needed for these types of reach-based buys.

Another item for the to-do list. ●



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Jan Hofmeyr
EVP and Chief
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Mark Pedowitz
Chairman and
Chief Executive
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SKYY Vodka



Bernadette Knight
Senior Category
Marketing Director
Campari Group

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Devin O'Loughlin
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People

Notable executives on the move



ALLEN MEDIA GROUP

Byron Allen's Allen Media Group has tapped **Geraldine Moriba** as senior VP, news & entertainment for African-American-gear website The Griot. The veteran media executive, filmmaker and journalist has worked at ABC, CNN, NBC and PBS.



ALLEN MEDIA GROUP

Allen Media Group has added **Matthew Signer** as executive VP of production and content. He will focus on development and production of movies, TV series, documentaries, and other premium content for distribution via AMG's platforms.



CBS NEWS

Rick Jefferson has been named senior VP of news operations at CBS News, overseeing technical operations and production facilities worldwide. A longtime former NBC News executive, Jefferson was named as the division's VP of news operations in 2017.



CROWN MEDIA

Tom Ziangas has joined Crown Media Family Networks in New York as senior VP, revenue and strategic research, a newly created role. He comes from AMC Networks, where he had been senior VP of research & insights for more than a decade.



CROWN MEDIA

Crown Media Family Networks has named **Michael Grover** as VP, brand marketing, charged with developing consumer marketing initiatives for the Hallmark Channel parent's linear networks and SVOD services. He was a content marketing manager at Hulu.



FANDOM

Rachelle Savoia has joined Fandom as VP of communications, tasked with developing external, internal and executive communications strategy. She was VP of communications at WarnerMedia, overseeing domestic distribution comms for the Turner networks.



FETV

Family Entertainment Television (FETV) has named **Jaclyn Rann Cohen** as executive VP, content acquisitions and strategy. The 20-year Viacom veteran had most recently worked as executive VP, content strategy and acquisitions at TV Land.



FOX TV STATIONS

Marian Davey was named senior VP and GM of KMSB-WFTC, the Fox Television Stations-owned duopoly in Minneapolis. The 20-year veteran was VP and news director of the stations since 2013. Previously, she was managing editor and assistant news director.



HEARST TV

Paige Harrison has been promoted to VP of news at Hearst Television, based in New York. Formerly news director of WCVB Boston, she succeeds Andrew Vrees, who was named president and GM of WMUR Manchester, New Hampshire.



NCM

Scott Felenstein has been named president, sales, marketing and partnerships at National CineMedia. He was executive VP and chief revenue officer and will be succeeded by Mike Rosen, NCM's senior VP of East Coast sales.



NEXSTAR

James Baronet was named VP/general manager of Nexstar Media Group's Topeka, Kansas, operations, including NBC station KSNT, Fox outlet KTMJ and Vaughn Media-owned ABC/The CW affiliate KTKA. He had been GM of Sinclair Broadcast Group's KSAS Wichita, Kansas.



NICKELODEON

Nickelodeon has promoted **Eddie Gamarra** to the newly created position of VP, literary affairs, Nickelodeon and Awesomeness, responsible for evaluating literary material to option and develop into content. He had been VP of studio business development.



SBS

Albert Rodriguez was named president of Spanish Broadcasting System, succeeding Raul Alarcón in the role. He will continue as the company's chief operating officer, reporting to Alarcón, who will now be chairman and CEO.



SCRIPPS

Ross White was upped to VP and general manager of E.W. Scripps-owned KOAA in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Formerly director of sales at KOAA, an NBC affiliate, since 2016, he started his career at KVII in Amarillo, Texas, as a news photographer before moving into several sales roles.



XYTECH

Broadcast facility management software firm Xytech has named **Tanya Kelly** managing director, APAC, following its acquisition of ScheduALL from Net Insight. She had been a sales and solutions consultant for ScheduALL.



WISH

Circle City Broadcasting-owned WISH Indianapolis has named **Dr. Jerome Adams** to its reporting team. Adams, a former vice admiral in the U.S. Public Health Service, served as U.S. Surgeon General during the Trump administration.



WORLD OF WONDER

Los Angeles-based studio World of Wonder, producer of the RuPaul's Drag Race franchise, has hired **Johnni Javier** to run its production arm in the United Kingdom. He is the former director of production & operations at Blast! Films.



WPIX

Nicole Tindiglia has been named news director of WPIX New York, overseeing newsgathering for the TV station, PIX11.com and their related apps. She had been assistant news director at CBS-owned WCBS New York and WLNY Riverhead, New York.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Other industry execs making moves

Vickie Burns has joined Black News Channel as senior VP of content, overseeing all editorial operations. Her news career includes leadership positions at NBC, Tribune Media and Scripps. ... **Jeff Murphy** has joined Charter Communications as senior VP, corporate finance and development. He comes from Credit Suisse Group. Charter also made organizational changes to its sales, marketing and field operations units: **Adam Ray** was named executive VP, sales operations & planning; senior VP of marketing **Sharon Peters** added marketing, creative services and digital marketing to her responsibilities; and **Tom Monaghan**, senior VP of field operations, will now oversee all 11 operating regions. ... **Andy Charalambous** was named VP of sales for Europe, Middle East and Africa at OpenVault. He had been managing director at Prospect Theory.



Spectrum News 1 Los Angeles anchor **Giselle Fernandez** gets ready to tape the virtual *B+C/Multichannel News* Wonder Women of Los Angeles event on May 24 at the Andaz Hotel.



Honoree **Dee Harris-Lawrence**, executive producer and showrunner of OWN's *David Makes Man*.



Michelle Wroan, managing partner at KPMG LLC, accepts Wonder Women of Los Angeles honors.



(From l.): **Yarel Ramos**, anchor of Univision's *Edicion Digital California*; **Iris Gonzalez**, public affairs strategist, Kids Street; **Faith Bautista**, CEO, National Diversity Coalition and National Asian American Coalition; **Ellen Schned**, CEO, Strong Women Alliance; and **Burke Berendes**, partner, Kids Street & Condista, at a VIP mixer held during the Wonder Women of Los Angeles taping.



Wonder Women of Los Angeles honoree **Duan Peng**, senior VP, data & artificial intelligence, WarnerMedia.



Anthony Anderson (l.) and Tracee Ellis Ross are interviewed at an ABC/ABC Signature drive-in FYC event for *Black-ish* June 15 at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California.



Stephen Colbert takes the stage at New York's Ed Sullivan Theater June 14 for the first *Late Show* taping before a studio audience in more than a year.



At the Strong Women Alliance's June 7 viewing party for *Wonder Women* of Los Angeles (l. to r.): Dawn Ferry, production designer; Rose Perez Jessen, media attorney at law; Ellen Schned, founder, Strong Women Alliance; and Andrea Pullen, senior manager, content distribution, Univision.



David Paymer (l.) and Gina Hecht at the June 10 season two red carpet event for FX's *Dave* at the Greek Theater in Los Angeles.



Hulu's Onyx Collective and Searchlight Pictures marked Juneteenth with a June 19 screening of documentary *Summer of Soul* at Harlem's Marcus Garvey Park (l. to r.): Jihan Robinson, VP, alternative programming and Tara Duncan, president, Freeform/Onyx Collective; director Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson; and Jacqueline Glover, head of documentary, ABC News/Onyx Collective.

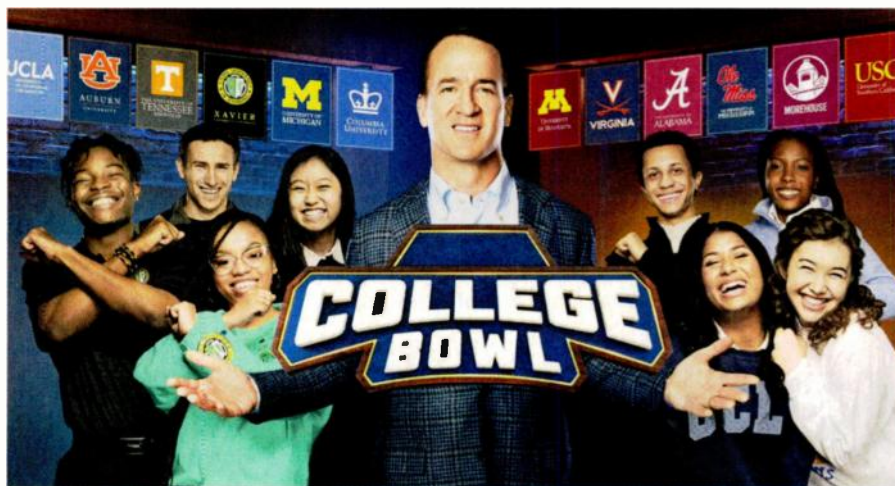
Scott Kowalhy/CBS; Frank Micelotta/FXX/Picture Group; Searchlight Pictures/Todd Williamson, ABC

Ad Meter

Who's spending what where

PROMO MOJO

Our exclusive weekly ranking of the programming that networks are promoting most heavily (June 21-27)



College Bowl, NBC

TV Ad Impressions: **231,196,133**
 Total TV ad impressions within all U.S. households, including national linear (live and time-shifted), VOD plus OTT and local

Est. Media Value: **\$1,471,598**
 Estimated media value of in-network promos

On the strength of 231.2 million TV ad impressions, NBC's promo for Peyton Manning-hosted (and Capital One-sponsored) College Bowl takes first place. Hallmark makes a strong showing, with promos for Hallmark Channel movie Sand Dollar Cove in second and Hallmark Movies & Mysteries' "Christmas in July" movie marathon in fourth. HGTV rounds out the list, building excitement for Celebrity IOU in third and Renovation Island in fifth.

Visit nexttv.com/news for weekly Promo Mojo charts between print issues.

TOP 5 PROMOTIONS

- College Bowl, NBC**
 TV Ad Impressions **231,196,133**
 Est. Media Value **\$1,471,598**
- Sand Dollar Cove, Hallmark Channel**
 TV Ad Impressions **204,247,645**
 Est. Media Value **\$893,008**
- Celebrity IOU, HGTV**
 TV Ad Impressions **199,174,110**
 Est. Media Value **\$768,155**
- 'Christmas in July,' Hallmark Movies & Mysteries**
 TV Ad Impressions **191,021,882**
 Est. Media Value **\$613,058**
- Renovation Island, HGTV**
 TV Ad Impressions **189,878,150**
 Est. Media Value **\$708,292**

BIG SPENDERS

Brands ranked by the greatest increase in TV spend (June 21-27)

1 Walmart

Spend Increase:	126%
Est. TV Spend:	\$2.5M
Spend Within Industry:	22%
Top Network:	BET

2 The Home Depot

Spend Increase:	122%
Est. TV Spend:	\$4M
Spend Within Industry:	47%
Top Network:	HGTV

3 Neutrogena

Spend Increase:	120%
Est. TV Spend:	\$2.9M
Spend Within Industry:	20%
Top Network:	CBS

4 Lowe's

Spend Increase:	93%
Est. TV Spend:	\$2.2M
Spend Within Industry:	26%
Top Network:	HGTV

5 DreamWorks Animation

Spend Increase:	61%
Est. TV Spend:	\$3.4M
Spend Within Industry:	19%
Top Network:	NBC

MOST-SEEN TV ADS

Brands ranked by TV ad impressions (June 21-27)

1 Domino's

TV Ad Impressions:	1.4B
Est. TV Spend:	\$7.6M
Interruption Rate:	1.67%
Top Show:	Law & Order: SVU

2 GEICO

TV Ad Impressions:	1.36B
Est. TV Spend:	\$13.6M
Interruption Rate:	2.51%
Top Show:	U.S. Olympic Trials

3 Liberty Mutual

TV Ad Impressions:	1.34B
Est. TV Spend:	\$8.4M
Interruption Rate:	1.84%
Top Show:	Law & Order: SVU

4 Progressive

TV Ad Impressions:	1.01B
Est. TV Spend:	\$10.9M
Interruption Rate:	2.29%
Top Show:	NBA Playoffs

5 Disney+

TV Ad Impressions:	994.5M
Est. TV Spend:	\$2.7M
Interruption Rate:	1.46%
Top Show:	Big City Greens

B+C'S MOST VIEWED

Top stories on broadcastingcable.com, June 8-July 2

1. 'Jeopardy!' Guest Hosts' Ratings: How They Rank
2. Fox Nation Offers Military Free One-Year Subscriptions
3. NTIA Releases New Broadband 'Need' Map
4. Sinclair Targets \$400 Million in Cash Flow, 4.4 Million Subscribers for Its Big Sports Streaming Service
5. Ripley Says Bally Sports Net DTC Offering Will Be 'Lean-Forward' Experience

To read these stories, visit broadcastingcable.com

NIELSEN ADDS 'THE GAUGE' TO MEDIA-INDUSTRY DASHBOARD

NETFLIX ACCOUNTED FOR just 6% of U.S. video consumption in May, same as YouTube.

And just 26% of video watching last month came from streaming.

These surprises and more can be found in "The Gauge," a new infographic, updated monthly, that Nielsen is now including in its weekly audience reports.

"The Gauge pulls back the curtain on just how much

NEXT TV

today's major streaming platforms are being used," the

research company said in a note introducing the new infographic. "It's an important step forward in the journey towards true cross-platform measurement, an undertaking that

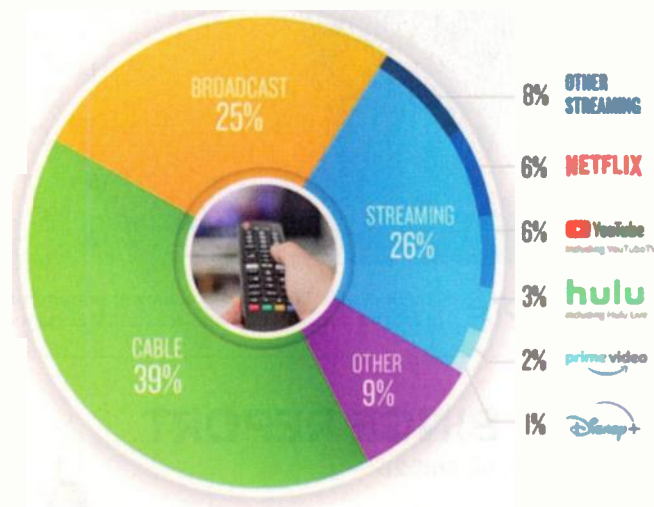
Nielsen will be uniquely equipped to handle with Nielsen One." — Daniel Frankel

For more stories like this, go to nexttv.com.

THE GAUGE

Nielsen's Total TV and Streaming Snapshot

MAY 2021
Total Day
Persons 2+



SOURCE: Nielsen National TV Panel Data plus Streaming Video Rating

STICKIEST SHOWS *Top 10 cable programs ranked by viewer engagement**



Stickiness Rank	Ratings Rank	Telecast (Week Ending June 27)	Network	Stickiness Index*
1	36	90 Day Fiancé: Happily Ever After?	TLC	145
2	32	Sand Dollar Cove	Hallmark	145
3	5	2021 NBA Playoffs	ESPN	145
4	27	2021 BET Awards	BET	140
5	134	Tyler Perry's Sistas	BET	137
6	58	WWE Monday Night Raw	USA	133
7	906	La Rosa de Guadalupe	GALA	133
8	92	Good Witch	Hallmark	128
9	325	The Stranger She Brought Home	LMN	127
10	103	Little People, Big World	TLC	126



The Stickiness Index looks at viewer engagement based on several factors. A higher number indicates more of the audience is tuned in for the duration of the telecast. * TV Engagement ratings powered by Comscore's TV Essentials. (Sorted by social media activity.)

Tyler Perry's Sistas: BET

STICKEST SHOWS Top 10 broadcast programs ranked by viewer engagement*



Stickiness Rank	Ratings Rank	Telecast (Week Ending June 27)	Network	Stickiness Index*
1	70	<i>Si Nos Dejan</i>	Univision	143
2	84	<i>La Hija Del Embajador</i>	Univision	141
3	75	<i>Diseñando Tu Amor</i>	Univision	139
4	110	<i>Hercai, Amor Y Venganza</i>	Telemundo	137
5	86	<i>¿Quién Es La Máscara?</i>	Univision	135
6	1	<i>America's Got Talent</i>	NBC	134
7	114	<i>La Suerte De Loli</i>	Telemundo	131
8	113	<i>Exatlón Estados Unidos</i>	Telemundo	130
9	15	<i>FBI</i>	CBS	128
10	120	<i>Café Con Aroma De Mujer</i>	Telemundo	126

comscore The Stickiness Index looks at viewer engagement based on several factors. A higher number indicates more of the audience is tuned in for the duration of the telecast. * TV Engagement ratings powered by Comscore's TV Essentials. (Sorted by social media activity.)

THE BINGE REPORT

THE WEEK OF JUNE 21

TV Time users track the shows they're watching on TV via the TV Time app. That data is then used to determine the most-binged shows of the week in the U.S.



1	<i>Manifest</i>	Hulu	Share of binges: 2.42%
2	<i>Elite</i>	Netflix	Share of binges: 2.17%
3	<i>Too Hot to Handle</i>	Netflix	Share of binges: 1.53%
4	<i>Lucifer</i>	Netflix	Share of binges: 1.21%
5	<i>Modern Family</i>	Peacock/Hulu	Share of binges: 0.99%
6	<i>Workin' Moms</i>	Netflix	Share of binges: 0.99%
7	<i>Grey's Anatomy</i>	Netflix/Hulu	Share of binges: 0.95%
8	<i>Black Summer</i>	Netflix	Share of binges: 0.91%
9	<i>Bosch</i>	Amazon Prime Video	Share of binges: 0.87%
10	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	Hulu	Share of binges: 0.86%

Networks reflected don't include every viewing platform available nor total viewing in share of binge

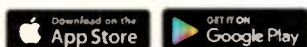
MCN'S MOST VIEWED

Top five stories on *multichannel.com*, June 8-July 2

1. NTIA Releases New Broadband 'Need' Map
2. Fox Nation Offers Military Free One-Year Subscriptions
3. Discovery Plus: Everything You Need to Know
4. Six Days In, Cox Media Stations Still Have No Live Online Streams
5. Sinclair Targets \$400 Million in Cash Flow, 4.4 Million Subscribers for Its Big Sports Streaming Service

To read these stories, go to *multichannel.com*.

Manifest: Hulu; FBI: CBS



To receive 'The Binge Report' and other TV Time reports, visit www.whipmedia.com/subscribe/





Most-Watched Shows on TV in June



Of all the live, linear minutes watched by VIZIO smart TVs in June, 3.05% of the time was spent watching NBA basketball. See which other shows captured the most watch-time* in the graphic below.



Via Vizio's Inscape, the TV data company with insights from a panel of 17 million active and opted-in smart TVs. Data is linear live TV only and includes all episode types (new and reruns). Rankings are by percent share duration, defined as 'of all the live, linear minutes watched in June, X% of the time was spent on show Y'

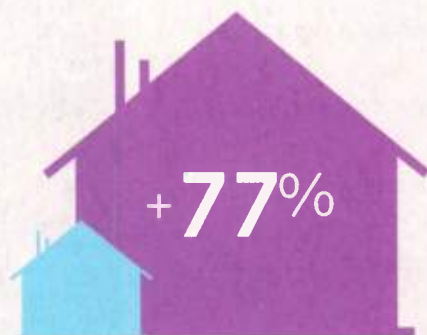


People Active Online* at Home During the Work Day

1/29/2020-6/29/2021 | Data from 14 Metro Areas. Updated Weekly

Light blue: People active online* during the work day before COVID-19
 Purple: People active online* during the work day now

NATIONAL AVERAGE IN THE UNITED STATES



22.6 Million

were active online* during the work day before COVID-19

40.0 Million

are active online* during the work day now

CITY BY CITY BREAKDOWN



*Estimates based on metro area populations and anonymized data taken from a sample of U.S. households powered by the Plume Cloud. Active online defined as 6+ hours between 9a-6p.

VUIT'S MOST-WATCHED STATION FEEDS Top 10 local broadcasters streamed on the VUit app

Rank	Station	Location	Network	What news event drove tune-in?
1	KTSF*	San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose	Lincoln Broadcasting	
2	WFMZ	Philadelphia	Maranatha Broadcasting	
3	WWTV	Traverse City, Mich.	Heritage Broadcasting	
4	WVUE	New Orleans	Gray Television	
5	WKYT	Lexington, Ky.	Gray Television	
6	WSFA	Montgomery-Selma, Ala.	Gray Television	
7	KTUU	Anchorage, Alaska	Gray Television	
8	WRDW	Augusta-Aiken, Ga.	Gray Television	
9	WAFB	Baton Rouge, La.	Gray Television	
10	KIEM	Eureka, Calif.	Terrier Media	

* Most out-of-market viewers

STREAMED CONTENT The VUit app's 10 most-viewed pieces of content



- Business First AM** | Daily news series
- food.curated.** | Documentary series
- Stirrin' It Up with Chef John Folsie** | Culinary program
- Martin Yan's Gourmet Kitchen** | Culinary program
- The Fly-Over Music Hour** | On-demand local music
- Washington Post Live** | On-demand interviews
- VUit eSports** | Original on-demand eSports
- Detroit Muscle** | Automotive enthusiast program
- Small Batch Sessions** | Curated local music
- Class of 2021** | Graduation replays



VUIT'S MOST POPULAR CHANNELS

Most streamed channels on the VUit app for June 2021

1. ACCDN Confidential
2. NYC Live Street Cam
3. SkyVision Live
4. VUit eSports
5. Exhale TV

To view these channels, go to www.VUit.com



VUit is a streaming service supported by 200 local TV stations. Run by Syncbak with an investment by Gray Television, VUit offers a variety of channels and local broadcast feeds.



By Rick Boucher, Internet Innovation Alliance
@rickboucherdc

Careful Fund Allocation Will Bridge Digital Divide

Federal monies should pave the most efficient path to universal broadband

The pandemic has created a new sense of urgency about closing America's digital divide, elevating it from something that is desirable to something deemed essential. Not surprisingly, we've seen an outpouring of proposals for ways the government should assist, which vary greatly in the levels of recommended funding and the methods for allocating government dollars.

President Joe Biden recently agreed to a \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure plan that includes \$65 billion for building out broadband across the nation (a substantial reduction from his \$100 billion proposal for broadband). Now, the package needs Republican support to pass the Senate.

Achieving universal broadband by equipping every American with the transformative power of digital tools, social networks and online platforms would be a milestone accomplishment, but simply appropriating funding does not guarantee success and with a decreased amount of funding, expenditures must be judiciously planned. As lawmakers sift through a myriad of ideas on how the funds should be spent, ensuring the best use of taxpayer funds and carving the most efficient path toward universal connectivity should be top priorities.

Here are three guiding principles for allocation of federal dollars to close the digital divide.

Don't miss the forest for the fiber:

America's broadband infrastructure investment should be based on technology-neutral criteria, allowing for a combination of solutions that are adapted to local needs and can be rapidly and cost-effectively deployed. With limited funds to tackle all three parts of the digital divide — deployment, affordability and adoption — ensuring the most efficient use of funds is critical. For deployment, while policymakers may reasonably favor the use of fiber optics where feasible, they should resist the urge to foreclose other next best solutions, especially in those hardest-to-serve areas where, even with government subsidies, it may be uneconomical to lay miles and miles of fiber to serve a single household.

To get infrastructure legislation passed, now's the time to make practical funding allocation decisions to ensure that the gap between digital haves and have-nots can be

closed with the federal dollars made available. Fiber costs \$20,000 per mile, by some estimates, and connecting every home with fiber in rural, mountainous and sparsely populated locations would prove prohibitively expensive.

Use market mechanisms to maximize broadband deployment:

Federally funded broadband deployment should be structured in a market-sensitive way. Over the past decade, the Federal Communications Commission has developed a competitive funding allocation process, via reverse auctions, to ensure broadband projects produce the greatest benefit for the dollars expended. The auctions maximize efficiency as bidders compete against one another to offer the lowest price at which they are willing to provide their services.

It would make sense to hold a series of auctions, rather than a single auction, to benefit from lessons learned from previous bidding rounds. Additionally, holding multiple auctions would help ensure that unserved communities don't fall through the cracks, in the event that there is no round-one bidder for certain areas.

The more bidders the merrier: In order to encourage a highly competitive market, all qualified, proven and capable bidders should be welcomed into the process. Strong guardrails should be put in place to ensure entities seeking to bid have the resources required to deliver on their promises. Once these standards are met, the more bidders the better.

The digital divide has been a problem for the past quarter-century. Closing the gap is now a national priority, and bipartisan support for a solution has never been stronger. With the appropriation of federal dollars for broadband now likely, a well-considered allocation plan along these lines is the next essential step. ●

Rick Boucher was a Democratic member of the U.S. House from Virginia for 28 years and chaired the House Energy and Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Communications and the Internet. He is honorary chairman of the Internet Innovation Alliance (IIA).



Simply appropriating funding does not guarantee success and with a decreased amount of funding, expenditures must be judiciously planned.

Arthur Smith

Chairman, A. Smith & Co. and Tinopolis USA

Prolific producer has new seasons of 'Mental Samurai,' 'Ninja Warrior,' 'Hell's Kitchen' on the air

From *American Ninja Warrior* to *American Gangster* to *Hell's Kitchen*, Arthur Smith and his A. Smith & Co. remain one of the most potent production engines for reality programming in the television business.

With one of A. Smith's latest creations, action-oriented game show *Mental Samurai*, which launched a new season on Fox May 25, Next TV managing editor Daniel Frankel caught up with the former Dick Clark Productions and MCA Universal executive, who's come a long way from his days covering hockey for the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. while in his 20s. Here's an edited transcript of their conversation.

What's the winning formula for an A. Smith & Co. Productions show?

To start, I always insist that every A. Smith & Co. project must have three things: great casting, a solid concept or format and killer execution. Once those elements are in place, we strive to make our shows in a way that stands out and makes a strong emotional impact. When we look back on our shows that have really resonated, they have accomplished all of those goals.

What programming moments are you most proud of? It's difficult to choose favorites after producing 5,000-plus hours of programming across 200-plus series, but the moment Kacy Catanzaro, all five feet, 95 pounds of her, shocked the world by becoming the first woman (and by far smallest competitor) to ever complete the *American Ninja*

Warrior course was an incredible milestone that not only went viral and brought tremendous awareness to the show, but also started a women's movement in the sport, dramatically increasing female participation in the following years. Similarly, after 300-plus episodes of *Hell's Kitchen* there are countless moments that stand out — like our 19 amazing chefs who have been crowned winners, or the completely overwhelmed chef who cried during the opening night pep talk, and the misguided chef who challenged Gordon Ramsay to a fight — but something happens in season 20 (which premiered May 31 on Fox) that ranks among the craziest moments ever.

Is A. Smith focusing on the streaming market these days? Does that change the programming?

We have been working with all the streamers in some way for several years now. Recently, we dropped *Ellen's Next Great Designer* on HBO Max, we collaborated with Pharrell Williams on the Netflix gospel series *Voices of Fire* and on BET+ we delve into shocking true-crime stories with *American Gangster: Trap Queens*. We're also in pre-production for the newest season of Netflix's buzzy rendition of the beloved household game *Floor Is Lava*.

How has the reality competition genre changed since you first got involved? There were fewer companies developing these kinds of concepts, we enjoyed a less fragmented market, and perhaps most important since freshness

is a key element of the genre, every idea was a new one. Two of our most successful series were the first of their kind: *Hell's Kitchen* was the first food competition show on network television and *American Ninja Warrior* was the first obstacle course show on network television. Today, with more companies trying to dream up a fresh concept unlike anything seen before, the competition genre is, simply put, way more competitive.

How much day-to-day interaction are you able to have with a show like *Mental Samurai*? Do you spend most of your time running the company? Producing will always be my passion, so I'm involved in every show we produce in some way. For several shows, like *Hell's Kitchen*, *The Titan Games* and *Mental Samurai*, I'm on set for every shoot. And there's no place I'd rather be. ●

BONUS FIVE

What shows are you binge-watching? *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Mare of Easttown*.

What streaming services do you subscribe to? All of them. And I mean all of them.

Do you still follow pro hockey? As a Canadian and a former head of CBC Sports, absolutely yes. The Montreal Canadiens are like a religion for me.

What technology that you use every day do you like the best (hardware or software)? My smart home app Savant Pro that allows me to control virtually everything in my house via my cellphone. And what could a producer love more than complete control?

Which shot did you get? Moderna, Pfizer or J&J? None? Pfizer.





CABLE HALL OF FAME

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2021

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THE CABLECENTER

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CEO,
BAKER MEDIA INC.



JAMES A. "JIM" BLACKLEY
ADVISOR TO
THE CEO,
CHARTER
COMMUNICATIONS



CATHY HUGHES
FOUNDER &
CHAIRWOMAN,
URBAN ONE



ALFRED LIGGINS III
CEO, URBAN ONE;
CHAIRMAN & CEO,
TV ONE



JEFF MARCUS
CABLE
PIONEER



DAVID N. WATSON
PRESIDENT & CEO,
COMCAST CABLE



JEFF ZUCKER
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Congratulations
Sarah Kate Ellis
for receiving the
PRIDE TV Award for
Leadership and Courage.

GLAAD's advocacy has inspired
countless authentic LGBTQ+
portrayals on screen.

Representation matters.



SAG-AFTRA.

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