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WOLF PACK

Whether it's the *Chicago*, *FBI* or *Law & Order* shows, broadcast TV is dominated by Dick Wolf. What's next for his massive brand?



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10 COVER STORY

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Some scenes from Dick Wolf's universe of procedural dramas, which span the *Law & Order* and *Chicago* franchises on NBC and CBS's FBI franchise.

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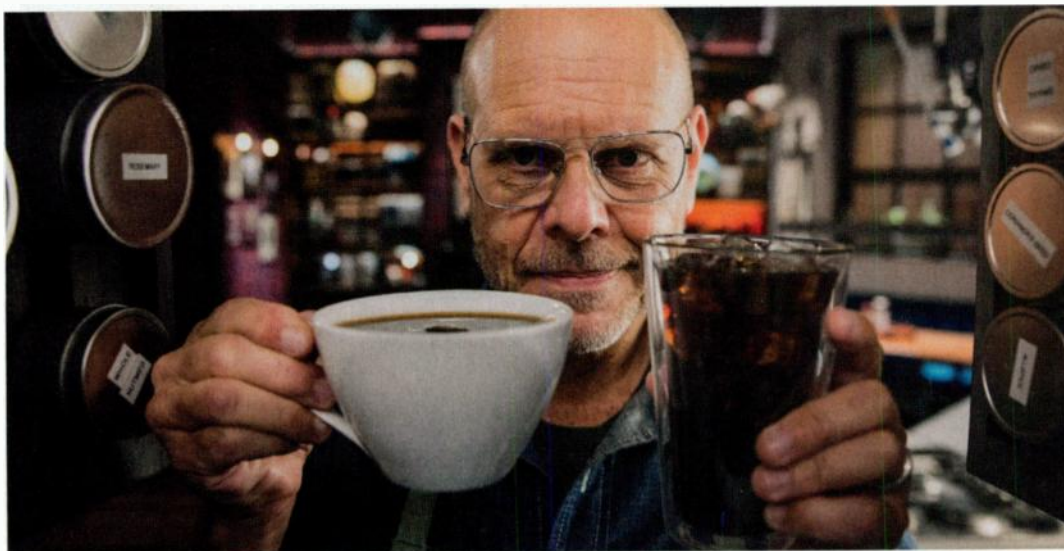
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Upfront's New Normal: Higher Ad Prices, More Digital Dollars

Media companies add streaming services to the mix as advertisers see reach



By Jon Lafayette
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After COVID-19 pushed last year's negotiations into September, the 2021 upfront television market reflects the new normal of the media world.

There is an eroding supply of broadcast and cable ratings points and a post-quarantine economy that's heating up. Both trends point to higher prices and more ad dollars flowing to digital video, trends that have been accelerating for years.

Like last year, the networks' elaborate upfront presentations will be held via Zoom instead of in venues like Carnegie Hall or Radio City Music Hall.

Matt Sweeney, chief investment officer

at GroupM, said that in last year's upfront there was a spirit of empathy that got people to work together to get through a difficult time. This year, he's concerned about "the accelerated degradation in traditional ratings" that will make it more difficult for clients to reach consumers via television.

If the dwindling supply of ratings points sends prices up, "I think there's a point at which the value of a unit or an impression gets beyond being an effective investment vehicle," he warned.

"What it does is it forces marketers and their media agents to find those audiences beyond just traditional TV," Sweeney said.

The big media companies know that, and instead of competing with streaming as it grows, they've bought or built their own streaming services, like Disney's Hulu, Comcast's Peacock, Fox's Tubi and ViacomCBS's Pluto TV and Paramount

Discovery and other traditional TV companies are seeking ad opportunities on streaming platforms, such as Discovery Plus, home to Alton Brown's Good Eats: The Return.

Plus (see related story, page 16).

"We're really excited about all of those platforms," Sweeney said, adding, "We're watching very closely to see what the consumer uptake is with those services. At some point, how many is too many."

When the smoke cleared for last year's upfront, commercial time worth \$18.6 billion was bought, including \$8.7 billion on the broadcast networks and \$9.9 billion on cable networks, according to Media Dynamics.

The total was down 14.8% from the 2019-20 upfronts, but down 2% when the upfront buys canceled because of the pandemic are taken into account.

John Nitti, chief media officer at Verizon Communications, a big advertiser, said double-digit price increases will lead to money moving where there's better returns.

"If money is going to move, money is going to move," Nitti, a former agency media buyer, said. "Marketers have become more and more comfortable with digital streaming platforms. If we continue to see the degradation of linear ratings but growth within digital platforms, I think you'll see the merger of the upfront and NewFronts into one time frame."

Nitti wants the flexibility that was a hallmark of the 2020 upfront to continue into 2021.

"Why should you not be able to make optimizations and changes?" he asked. "As a retailer at heart, we need to be looking at our numbers daily. We need to drive those optimizations and have flexibility, so that will continue to persist."

In some cases, he noted, traditional media vendors were actually able to switch schedules faster than their digital counterparts.

Planting a Flag in Streaming

Media companies will be offering their own streaming services as a way to restore their reach and expand the inventory they have to offer in the upfront.

Fox, for example, will be including its Tubi ad-supported streaming service (AVOD) during its entertainment programming upfront presentation,

president of ad sales Marianne Gambelli said.

Gambelli anticipates a strong upfront market after several good quarters in the scatter market.

With sports back and production of scripted shows back in gear, Gambelli hopes ratings will make a comeback. "But I think demand will probably outstrip that supply to some degree," she said.

That could mean higher prices.

"But then, there's an explosion in AVOD [ad-supported video-on-demand]," she said. "I think a lot of money will go there. We're really excited about that space, so I think there will be ways to manage through it. Like there always is."

Another way to increase the supply of broadcast inventory is to include older viewers, instead of buying and selling based on the 18-49 and 25-54 demographics. A number of programmers, including A+E Networks, have proposed switching to adults 18-plus as the new television currency.

"It has to happen," Gambelli said. "When you're buying broadcast, why wouldn't you just count the entire audience, then do your narrowcasting in digital?"

Increasingly advertisers are buying based on targets other than age and sex, such as people likely to buy cars. "It has to evolve, she said. "That's where we really unlock the value of broadcast."

While traditional linear supply is tight, digital supply may be as well, warned Jon Steinlauf, chief U.S. advertising sales officer at Discovery.

Scatter a Leading Indicator

"The strongest indicator of how this market is going to go has been the strength of second-quarter scatter," Steinlauf said. "The scatter market for us has been sizzling hot in second quarter, even better than first quarter."

During its first-quarter earnings call, Discovery said it was seeing prices in scatter that were 50% higher than upfront.

"People are talking a lot about supply being tight," Steinlauf said. "It's clearly tight in linear



Above: The CW last year gave buyers a heads up on the delayed launch of new series like *Superman & Lois*. Below: Fox ad sales chief Marianne Gambelli hopes for a post-pandemic ratings comeback.

and there are questions about how tight it is going to be in nonlinear. I'm of the camp that thinks nonlinear is going to be tighter than people think."

Inventory will be tight because the streaming services are new and just ramping up in terms of adding subscribers. The ones that take ads at all are running as little as four minutes of commercials per hour, a fraction of the load on broadcast and cable.

The digital and streaming inventory will be important this year because advertisers are looking to make up for the reach they're losing in traditional broadcast and cable.

Discovery has built a \$500-million-a-year digital business with its Go apps and this year added the Discovery Plus streaming service to the mix. Advertisers can reach cord-cutters with the digital product.

"They're all on a mission for reach," Steinlauf said. "If we wanted to sell out Discovery Plus on the first day of the upfront, we probably could," he said. "We're not going to because there's too many other more lucrative markets for it down the road," including programmatic markets where CPMs are at a premium.

Steinlauf recalled that a year ago, there was talk about moving the upfront to the end of the year and switching to a calendar that starts in January versus the broadcast year, which starts in October.

All that talk has gone by the wayside as categories largely shut down by the pandemic — travel,

restaurants, movie studios, nonessential retail — are coming back to the ad market.

Underdelivery Concerns

With traditional ratings down, media buyers and advertisers have complained about underdelivery. The shows they bought commercials in last upfront didn't get the audiences they were promised, if they ran at all, as production delayed the start of many scripted series.

The CW told advertisers that its scripted shows wouldn't premiere until the first quarter, said executive VP national sales Rob Tuck, and provided audience estimates based on the alternative schedule. "We got through the fourth quarter in great shape; our clients came out if it in great shape," Tuck said.

Later on, The CW launched its scripted shows, including *Superman & Lois*, *Walker* and *Kung Fu*. As part of its upfront, The CW is providing each client with an individual report card that shows how the CW delivered on their 2020-21 upfront deals.

"We've heard the clients screaming about how the linear networks took their money, didn't deliver and didn't care," Tuck said. "We took their money, we did care and we delivered on our promises.

"We really try," he said. "We're the little guys. Our service has to be good. If we're causing a problem, it's too easy to get rid of us. It just is."

That approach meant The CW had inventory to sell in scatter instead of having to give it to clients as make-goods. The CW feasted on high prices in scatter and should be able to take advantage of a strong upfront as well.

"I think there's a lot of pent-up demand," Tuck said. That will fuel business, the economy and the ad market.

"There will be greater demand than a year ago," he said.

"Do I think more money will shift to digital? Sure, because the agencies and clients always follow where the audience goes," Tuck added. "The great thing about us is we're on all these platforms. We were the first network to be multiplatform, so we play in that world." ●



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Bellator's Scott Coker Looks to Strike a Blow With Showtime Deal

MMA promotion plans for pay-per-view caliber fights on premium net



By R. Thomas Umstead
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Bellator MMA is betting that its new Showtime television deal will give it a fighting chance at drawing in combat sports fans.

The 13-year-old Bellator — after working through several TV deals over the past decade with distributors such as as Spike TV (now Paramount Network), DAZN and CBS Sports Network — has secured a multiyear deal with Showtime that calls for at least two live monthly fight cards to air on the premium channel.

Under the tutelage of president Scott Coker, ViacomCBS-owned Bellator has solidified its position as the second-largest mixed martial arts promotion behind UFC. The organization launched its Showtime deal last month with three consecutive weeks of live telecasts featuring such popular fighters as Patricio "Pitbull" Freire, Ryan Bader and Lyoto Machida.

Coker spoke with B+C/Multichannel News about Bellator's TV prospects, as well as how it worked through the pandemic. He also looked ahead at the future of televised sports during the interview, which was edited for space and clarity.

B+C: How big is the Showtime deal, especially coming out of the pandemic?

Scott Coker: We're really excited to have a home. It's been like a family reunion — I

started my MMA career on TV at Showtime back in 2007. It's been a good trip back down memory lane, but now we're coming in with probably the greatest roster in the history of the company. There's a lot of great things happening for us.

B+C: What does Showtime bring that's different from other networks?

SC: When I think about Showtime, I think of premium networks, and I think of all the great fights we've watched over the years, whether it was from the Mike Tyson era of the '80s to Floyd Mayweather. Showtime also had Strikeforce, the MMA company that I used to own before I sold to the UFC. Showtime brings continuity and consistency of our product to our fans, and that's going to provide a good piece of business for us. Fans know that twice a month, they'll be able to come to Showtime and watch Bellator MMA. We're not asking subscribers to add another \$69 to \$89 to their cable bill to watch our product. For the fans, it's a great value.

B+C: Is there potential for pay-per-view events?

SC: We talked about that, but right now the philosophy is to put all of our quality fights on Showtime. Subscribers to Showtime are not only getting 40-something [boxing and MMA] fights a year, but also the entertainment shows that the network is noted for. Those big fights that should be on pay-per-view are going to be offered free on Showtime.



President Scott Coker (top) kept Bellator MMA moving through the pandemic, including holding Bellator 252, pitting Patricio "Pitbull" Friere against Pedro Carvalho, in a bubble at the Mohegan Sun casino.

B+C: How were you able to navigate through the pandemic last year to bring Bellator to this point?

SC: We decided to come back last July when we felt it was safe. We got signoff from our corporate owner Viacom to create a bubble at [Connecticut's] Mohegan Sun and to make sure that we were under the strictest guidelines possible. I think we accomplished that. I think after almost 12,000 tests now at the Mohegan Sun we've had a 0.05% positivity rate, which includes the officials, the fighters, the staff and the TV production staff. It was a different experience for everyone, including me.

Now I think people can see the light at the end of the tunnel. We're going to continue with this protocol until Viacom says we can make some changes: start opening up and traveling and doing flights in different arenas and buildings. We looked forward to it, but until they give us a green light, we're going to stay inside and operate inside this bubble.

B+C: Do you think the interruptions experienced during the pandemic have enhanced viewer interest for live sports, particularly now as fans begin to return to arenas?

SC: The reason why sports license fees are through the roof is because it's live and people can consume it when it's happening. I can't wait to go back to a baseball game. I'm a big [Golden State] Warriors fan — I can't wait to see them play. People are going to continue to sit at home and watch these events however they consume them because people love sports. When they get the green light to start going back to venues, I think it's just going to heighten the electricity of sports events. This is how important sports is to our culture: when we can all finally walk into a baseball stadium or a fight is packed to the rafters, that's when I know that things have turned the corner and things are OK. ●





RAISED BY WOLF

Between his *Law & Order*, *Chicago* and *FBI* brands, Dick Wolf has built an empire of crime shows and isn't done yet



Chicago Fire: Adrian S. Burrows Sr./NBC; Chicago Med: Elizabeth Sisson/NBC; Law & Order: Organized Crime NBC; Chicago P.D.: Matt Dimerstein/NBC; Wolf: Michael Parmalee/CBS/Universal Television; Dick Wolf: Elizabeth Sisson/NBC



By Michael Malone
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There isn't much to celebrate on broadcast TV these days, with one-time ratings magnets such as the Oscars drawing a fraction of the crowd they used to. Dick Wolf dramas, on the other hand, continue to win over sizable audiences. Wolf, the brain behind the multiple-show *Law & Order*, *Chicago* and *FBI* brands, has for decades delivered compelling storytelling, with just the right mix of character development and plot, to keep viewers tuning in.

Current Wolf series have more than 1,000 episodes on the air. The shows have

forever shone a spotlight on law enforcement and how cops corral the bad guys. George Floyd's death a year ago, and with Black Lives Matter taking off after that, has compelled many Americans to rethink the way they view police.

Wolf Entertainment has done its own soul-searching. An abundance of panel discussions, discussions in the writers' rooms, consultants and loads of research have pushed the Wolf team to fully grasp all sides of this vital issue. "The people inside the company, the showrunners, the producers, we spend a lot of time talking about police behavior, probably more time than any other non-law enforcement group of people in the country, because it's what we do every day," Wolf said at a press event for *Law & Order: Organized Crime*. "We're doing what we always do, which is listen very carefully and read virtually everything

The Dick Wolf universe, with such franchises as *Law & Order*, the *Chicago* procedurals and *FBI*, continues to draw ratings in a time of declining broadcast TV audiences.

written about this, from both sides of the spectrum."

Rick Eid, executive producer and showrunner on *Chicago P.D.* and *FBI*, told B+C/Multichannel News the series "try to be honest to the moment and the time. Obviously police reform is a really important issue right now that we are taking very seriously."

Wolf promised his cop dramas will reflect modern America in a thoughtful manner. "The shows will speak for themselves," he said.

Broadcast Bedrock

There are many of them. Tuesdays on CBS, season three of *FBI* is on at 9 p.m. and season two of *FBI: Most Wanted* is on at 10. On Wednesdays, NBC has season six of *Chicago Med* at 8 p.m., season nine of *Chicago Fire* at 9 p.m. and season eight of *Chicago P.D.* at 10.



It feels very contemporary, there's a strong following for the main characters, and the quality of acting — it all adds up to a positive.

— **Bill Carroll**, media consultant, on the shows created by Dick Wolf

Law & Order: SVU is in season 22 on NBC (the network signed on for three more seasons last year) and *Law & Order: Organized Crime* premiered to boffo ratings April 1, with viewers keen to see the reunion of Detectives Olivia Benson (played by Mariska Hargitay) and Elliot Stabler (played by Christopher Meloni), longtime partners on *SVU* until Meloni departed in 2011.

Detective Stabler gets his closeup on *Organized Crime* after his wife is murdered. "This is a show that will spend time with Stabler and his family and his life and his emotions," said Ilene Chaiken, *Organized Crime* executive producer and showrunner, at the press event. "We tell stories. We tell procedural stories. The DNA of the *Law & Order* franchise or *SVU* is very much in our show, but we probably will get to know Stabler in a way you've never gotten to know him."

Below, David Eigenberg (l.) as Lt. Christopher Herrmann and Christian Stolte as Firefighter Randall "Mouch" McHolland in *Chicago Fire*.

Wolf Entertainment is more than scripted stuff. Unscripted series, under the management of Tom Thayer, include *Murder for Hire* on Oxygen, as well as projects on the air and in development at A&E and Peacock, among other networks.

The scripted programs have such a dedicated viewer base that one night in mid April, NBC got second place in the

overnight ratings with its three Chicago shows — despite them being in repeats. Whether they're first runs or reruns, contemporary story lines and a deep bench of talent give the Wolf shows a unique sheen. Media consultant Bill Carroll mentioned "an unbelievable bench of stage actors playing guest characters that give a certain depth to the shows."

"It feels very contemporary, there's a strong following for the main characters, and the quality of acting — it all adds up to a positive," Carroll added.

Yes, WE Can

Asked about the success of his shows, Wolf shared a message he passed along to





network executives. “Years ago, at Christmastime, I sent plaques to all the network heads,” said Wolf. “They said, ‘It’s the writing, stupid.’”

Those who know him well said Wolf has a unique knack for finding talent, whether it’s in the writers’ room, cast or production wing, and giving them the space to do their thing. The Wolf series work because of a crystal clear vision from the boss and boots on the ground with the skill, experience and discipline to execute on that vision.

“Everybody has a voice,” said Peter Jankowski, Wolf Entertainment chief operating officer and executive producer on the *Law & Order*, *FBI* and *Chicago* brands.

Eid noted Wolf’s “amazing eye” for talent. “His vision is what we all try to follow,” said Eid. “It’s a very specific vision, not only for the show, but ultimately for the entire franchise.”

In 2019, Wolf Films rebranded to Wolf Entertainment. More recently, team members began referring to the team as WE. It’s an abbreviation, but it also sums

up the Wolf Entertainment mindset. True teamwork “sets us apart from other television production companies,” said Jankowski.

A foreboding mantra guides the WE team. “Work like you can be canceled tomorrow,” Jankowski shared. “That’s what happens in television.”

The common ground between the Wolf series is pretty simple, according to Eid: intriguing storytelling. “That’s what we strive for each and every episode — credible, grounded, honest story-

Marina Squerciati (l.) as Kim Burgess and LaRoyce Hawkins as Kevin Atwater in *Chicago P.D.*

They’ve built an incredible system that protects each aspect of filmmaking and they use their resources wisely.

— **Erin Underhill**, president, Universal Television

telling,” Eid said. “Every department shares their excellence on every episode. The aggregate effect of that energy and effort, and having the right people in place, creates shows that are differentiated from other shows.”

Wolf has long had an overall deal with Universal Television. Universal president Erin Underhill said the Wolf camp goes about its business in a unique manner. “Wolf Entertainment is really smart about how they approach production and post,” she said. “They’ve built an incredible system that protects each aspect of filmmaking and they use their resources wisely.”

The team has had to be particularly wise to shoot amidst the pandemic. They shot one fewer episode of *Organized Crime* due to COVID challenges, Wolf noted, “but that hasn’t affected the storytelling at all.”

Jankowski mentioned the “uncomfortable environment” actors and producers have experienced over the past year, masking up and staying apart. “Everyone’s muscles have had to be reprogrammed,” he said.

With so many shows, it’s a lot of muscles to reprogram. But the Wolf series all came together, as they always have.

The Wolf Entertainment rebrand saw a renewed focus on digital, including a social media push and podcasting, such as *The Law and Order: SVU Podcast* and scripted series *Hunted*.

Wolf’s son Elliot heads up the digital team. “It’s been amazing to see the response from fans while building the Wolf Entertainment community,” said Elliot, executive VP of digital. “When it comes to digital, we want to be at the tip of the spear in terms of innovation. All of our efforts are geared towards creating a stronger connection with fans of our shows and expanding the ways in which we tell stories.”

Hargitay and Meloni were the guests on the *SVU* podcast in late March, just before their characters reconnected. Hargitay spoke about the benefits of sharing a long, intense history with Meloni on set. “One of the biggest gifts,

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for me, is this innate knowing that Chris and I can navigate any scene to where it needs to be," she said. "We sort of know, better than anyone, really, what the scene is because of our history. And that's exciting because, if we read something and it's not quite right or it's more of a rough draft and it has beautiful shape but it's not quite nuanced as we want it to be, or not exactly right emotionally, we can get there."

What's Next

On May 3, NBC announced a straight-to-series order on *Law & Order: For the Defense*, a look at a criminal defense firm. "We spent the last 30 years on shows that played offense," Wolf said at the time. "Now it will be great to play defense."

Speaking before the announcement, Underhill said there is always demand for another Wolf series or two. "Knowing Dick's ambitions, I'm sure there are more great shows percolating in his head," she said. "He has a knack for knowing what people want to see."

Jankowski sounded a similar note before *For the Defense* was divulged. "With Dick Wolf, there is always room for another show," he said.

Major producers, including Shonda Rhimes and Ryan Murphy, have shifted to Netflix after a string of hits on traditional TV. Wolf has a project in development at Netflix, details of which his camp would not share. But Wolf Entertainment digs broadcast and the relatively hefty audiences a well-made show can gather, Jankowski said, and for the large number of episodes they get to produce.

In terms of streaming partners, NBCUniversal's Peacock inked a deal last year for three *Law & Order* series and the *Chicago* trio, while IMDb TV ordered the Wolf police-on-patrol drama *On Call*.

"As storytellers and producers, we don't care what platform it is," Eid said. "We're just trying to make something that's



Above, Mariska Hargitay as Detective Olivia Benson in NBC's *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. Below, Zeeko Zaki as Agent O.A. Zidan (l.) and Missy Peregrym as Agent Maggie Bell in CBS's *FBI*.

engaging and honest and entertaining."

The FBI brand has taken off since its 2018 launch. Star Missy Peregrym called her Maggie character "an everyday superhero" who wins over viewers with her peculiar mix of vulnerability, empathy and toughness.

Three consecutive episodes of *FBI: Most Wanted* drew more than 6 million viewers apiece in March and April.

FBI: International is scheduled to debut next season. It will follow the elite agents of the FBI's international division as they traverse the world to protect Americans. Derek Haas will be showrunner. "FBI is the fastest-growing brand on television and our partner Dick Wolf has found yet another creative way to expand its universe," said Kelly Kahl, CBS Entertainment president, when the series was announced in March.

Unstable(r)

Before its premiere, Wolf said *Organized Crime* would get way inside Elliot Stabler's head. "These villains are going to be really bad guys, and they'll give Chris [Meloni] a constant source of energy, outrage and belief in justice," said Wolf, "and a different way of pursuing criminals than we had before."

Stabler has always been tantalizingly close to snapping, and the murder of his wife has brought

him that much closer. "Injustice makes his head explode," Meloni said. "This is Elliot 2.0, and hopefully his evolution has a clear understanding that the world is unjust. How you adapt to realities that keep punching you in the face."

Organized Crime got off to a blazing start April 1. That night's *Law & Order: SVU* episode scored a 4.3 rating in viewers 18-49, and 17.1 million total viewers. The *Organized Crime* premiere did a 4.7 in 18-49, and 18.1 million have watched. Such ratings are rare on broadcast anymore.

Wolf told B+C he was "pleasantly surprised" by the crossover's performance. "Obviously the two-hour premiere was a truly special event," he said, "with Mariska and Chris getting back together."

The second season has 24 episodes planned. Wolf mentioned three eight-episode arcs for *Organized Crime*: One fashioned after *The Godfather*, one after *American Gangster* and one after *Scarface*.

The Wolf shows have long been described as being ripped from the headlines, but Wolf suggested there's more context to it. "We take the headline but not the body copy," he said.

Whether it's *Chicago*, *FBI*, *Law & Order* or a new brand, Wolf Entertainment shows have a knack for hooking viewers a moment or two after an episode begins, and holding them across the hour — week after week, season after season. "The audience looks forward to going on an emotional journey each week and they come because the shows deliver," said Underhill. "Dick is smart about infusing new life into his shows with compelling new characters, topical issues and dynamic guest stars."

Jankowski said Wolf understands television every bit as well as the network execs he deals with, including what keeps viewers watching at, say, Wednesdays at 8 in an increasingly on-demand world. "He has his eye on the horizon all the time," Jankowski said. "He has such a strategic mind. There's no producer in television like him." ●



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WHAT WILL TV LOOK LIKE IN 2021?

In 2020, television cemented its role as the arbiter of the national mood. Will that mood turn to hope in 2021?

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Advertisers Change Channels From Traditional Television

Pandemic, cord-cutting puts streaming services in the driver's seat



By Jon Lafayette
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Digital video advertising sellers were pretty full of themselves headed into the Interactive Advertising Bureau's annual IAB NewFronts earlier this month.

After a pandemic that accelerated streaming in general and connected TV usage in particular, digital video sellers are no longer pitching their products as just targeting vehicles or reach-extenders. No, they've gone mainstream, insisting that digital video is now the primary way to reach viewers.

"TV is aging and viewership is shrinking," Julian Mintz, national brand sales lead at Roku, told B+C/Multichannel News ahead of the four-day virtual parade of over-the-top programmers showing off their best product, held May 3-6. "Streaming is significantly, increasingly fueled largely by young audiences. Consequently, marketers are starting to more and more start their TV upfront experience with Roku. Not just with streaming, but with Roku."

In early conversations, "our advertisers are looking to spend 20% to 30% more" with Roku in this upfront than last year, Mintz said.

Roku, which led off the NewFronts with a presentation on May 3, might be a bit premature in dancing on the grave of linear broadcast and cable television. On the other hand, it might have a point.

"It's well-documented that the shift to streaming was well underway before the pandemic," said Brian Albert, managing director, U.S. agency video, Google, pointing to the falling ratings for events like the Super Bowl and record-low viewing for the Oscars.

"It's no big surprise more and more people are cutting the cord," Albert said, noting that pay TV



Digital video sellers are bullish on the NewFronts given the uptick in streaming during the pandemic.

subscribers are down to the mid-70 million level, a level unseen since the mid-1990s. At the same time, "streaming is booming... as the media mix shifts to more streaming, we're more excited about the value we can bring to clients."

Following the Dollars to Streaming

Matt Sweeney, chief investment officer for GroupM, pointed out that the move of spending to streaming is nothing new.

"If you look at the percentage of our upfront investment that goes to those data-driven digital [platforms], or the streaming extensions from traditional media companies, that's growing and will continue to grow," Sweeney said at the recent Advanced Advertising Summit, produced by B+C/Multichannel News's parent company Future plc.

"There are more ad-supported streaming products being launched," Sweeney said. "We hope there will be a chance to backfill some of the

commercial time lost in traditional linear."

The IAB said that digital video revenue increased 20.6% to \$26.2 billion in 2020. And a survey it conducted found that buyers expect digital video, including over-the-top and connected TV, to have the highest share of media budgets at 20%. That compares to 18% for linear broadcast and cable TV.

For a second year, IAB NewFronts presentations were conducted virtually. In addition to old-guard digital video companies like YouTube, Roku and Amazon, smart set makers are making presentations urging advertisers to buy ads directly on their devices.

"In 2020, we saw time spent on our televisions in streaming environments more than double," Vizio VP of advertising sales Adam Bergman said. "And as one of the top-selling smart TV brands on the market today, we're well-positioned to capture and capitalize on the growing trend."



Adam Bergman (l.), Vizio VP of advertising sales, and Matt Sweeney (r.), chief investment officer, GroupM.

"Dollars are shifting out of linear and into streaming," he added. "A big reason for this is that the connected TV combines all of the benefits of television, premium video content delivered via a large screen in a brand safe environment, but with all the benefits of digital, like precise targeting and measurement."

Advertisers benefit from buying ad directly from devices because "we own the hardware, the operating system and the data flowing through our platform," he said.

In its presentation May 3, Vizio talked about controlling ad frequency, addressable advertising, new data-driven content and the ability to retarget viewers after they've seen a commercial.

Also getting into the act are traditional media companies. Comcast's NBCUniversal, Charter Communications' Spectrum Reach, Tubi (now owned by Fox), A+E Networks and Tegna are among this year's presenters.

"We want to plant our flag and make people know we are a force to be reckoned with on both sides," said Stacie Danzis, VP of digital ad sales at A+E.

A+E hasn't launched its own direct-to-consumer streaming service, but it is distributing the content it owns to more digital video outlets, from platforms like Hulu and

Pluto TV to device makers like Samsung.

"We can get all audiences out there, whether they be cable subscribers, cord-cutters, cord-nevers or really that coveted younger audience," Danzis said.

NewFronts: Reaching Traditional, New Audiences

Reaching that audience that's not watching traditional TV is what the NewFronts is all about. And being watched on the living room screen is even better.

"Half our audience is cord-nevers or cord-cutters," said Jesse Judelman, senior VP of sales, Americas, at music-video service Vevo.

"We're quickly becoming a modern day TV network with digital roots," Judelman said. "Advertisers are viewing us that way."

Vevo offers brand-safe content that's increasingly viewed by multiple members of the household in the living room. It can sell its viewers by demographic, by matching geographies and genres, or even contextually through the mood of videos.

"Though we have incredible scale, there is a limit to our inventory. There is actual real scarcity, similar to a television network," Judelman said, adding that Vevo will sell 85% to 90% of its inventory in the upfront market.

"We had a banner year even during the pandemic," he said. "We're preparing for altogether, new level in '22, '23, and beyond." ●

For more coverage of the IAB NewFronts and individual presentations by companies mentioned in this story and others, visit nexttv.com.



Roku's aggressive pitch touted an aging audience and shrinking viewership for linear TV platforms.

35% OF BUYERS SAY THEY'LL UP CTV SPEND: IAB

CONNECTED TV IS expected to increase its share of ad dollars in 2021 after a banner 2020, according to a new Interactive Advertising Bureau report.

The study, released during the IAB NewFronts, found that 35% of the agency and brand executives surveyed said they planned to increase the portion of their budget allocated to connected TV. Only 6% said they would reduce it.

"The benefits of digital video for brands – including targetability, addressability, incremental reaction and the opportunity to leverage first-party data – have had 2021 a sellers' market," the survey said. "In fact, advertisers report that they expect CTV prices to go up in parallel to prices in linear TV."

The survey found that 21% of those surveyed plan to increase their spending on broadcast and cable TV, while 20% said they plan to cut it.

More directly, 73% of those surveyed said that the funds for increased spending on CTV were coming from linear TV.

Overall, digital video's share of total video budgets was 56%, and CTV had a 35% share of digital video, topping mobile at 33% and desktop at 32%.

"This is a bellwether moment in media that reflects the continued acceleration and shift to digital," said Eric John, VP of IAB Media Center. "While we are seeing growth across all digital video, the movement to more audience-based buying approaches has resulted in increased buyer demand for CTV."

The survey found some reservations about CTV. It is seen as "new;" costs per thousand (CPMs) are high relative to other video opportunities; and buyers used to the way TV is delivered and measured have slowed the adoption of CTV. Household addressable advertising will get bigger spending from 15% of advertisers, with 9% reducing addressable spending.

Spending on CTV rose 22% in 2020, the IAB said, with advertisers spending an average of \$20 million on CTV.

The IAB study was conducted by Advertiser Perceptions between March 19 and April 5. It interviewed 350 video advertising decision makers, who work with agencies or brands and are responsible for budgets of at least \$1 million. — JL

Mo Episodes, Mo Fun

Don Cheadle's Mo Monroe keeps 'Black Monday' rolling on Showtime



By Michael Malone
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Season three of comedy *Black Monday*, with Don Cheadle playing Wall Street hotshot Mo Monroe, begins May 23 on Showtime. About a motley bunch that causes a colossal stock market crash, *Black Monday* also has Andrew Rannells and Regina Hall in the cast.

Cheadle, an executive producer, spoke about his various TV and film projects, including a redo of *The Wonder Years* on ABC. An edited transcript follows.

B+C: For those who don't watch *Black Monday*, why should they start watching?

Don Cheadle: I think it's a very funny show. It's a sitcom on cable, which is a rarity. It's an excellent cast and a hilarious time to unplug your brain and just plug into some funny. And it's good escapism.

B+C: What drew you to the show in the first place?

DC: As always, it's the material first. I read the script and it made me laugh. The characters were very surprising and different. It was subject matter that we've seen in films and always dealt with in a more serious way. To do it under the auspices of Seth and Evan [executive producers Rogen and Goldberg] and their insanity was a cool spin on material we've seen before.

B+C: The show is set in 1987. What makes it timely in 2021?

DC: The substantive similarities of what we are dealing with and what Wall

Street deals with — guys with a robber baron mentality, win at all costs and fuck over whoever you have to, to get what you want — we can see in a lot of demonstrable ways how some of that hasn't changed very much. It allows us to get a perspective on, and to play with, under the auspices of comedy, things like race, politics, power dynamics and gender dynamics. This has been going on since time immemorial and now we're just starting to say, 'Hey, maybe it's not OK to embarrass me in front of the whole office and throw a book at my head.'

B+C: What will we see in the new season?

DC: The characters are all on their own trajectories and we're gonna find our way back to one another. Dawn is in prison. Mo is trying to start this new company and Paul Scheer's character, Keith, is ensconced with the Lehman brothers. We find Blair pursuing his political ambitions and being a complete sellout.

We're dipping into all it right off the bat and figuring out how these guys come together. That is very artfully done in a really interesting, plot-twist way.

B+C: How much was COVID-19 an issue in production?

DC: Very much so, like it is everywhere. We're getting tested every other day; everyone's in masks and shields. As soon as you say 'cut,' everyone puts their masks on and shields up. It's the third production I've done under these conditions and it's just very bizarre. And very necessary. If we're going to do it, this is the only way to do it.

B+C: How many seasons do you see *Black Monday* going?

Don Cheadle revisits Wall Street's go-go 1980s as Mo Monroe in *Black Monday*.

DC: Who knows? If there's more to do and people are having fun, there's always gonna be a place to go. There's no dearth of problems with the financial sector to deal with. There's a lot of room to play with, with these characters.

B+C: What drew you to ABC's *The Wonder Years*?

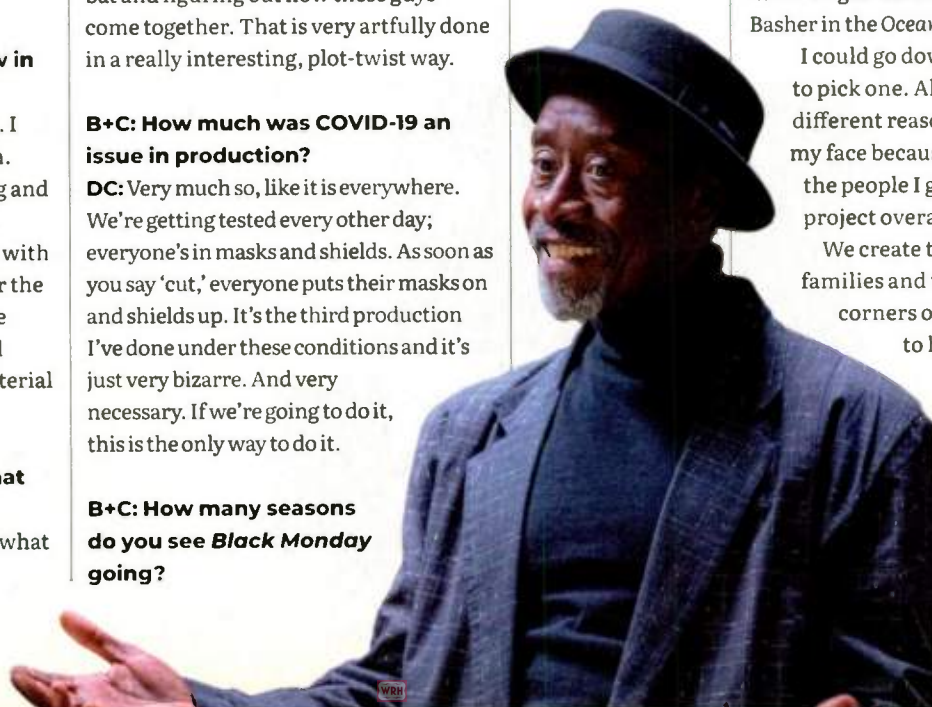
DC: Again, the script. The people behind it. And the opportunity to take this iconic story and these iconic characters and this part of quote-unquote Americana and look at another part of Americana that's often not looked at and what it means for the wonder years of young Black kids and their friends in Alabama during this period. I think it's just an interesting spin on that material.

B+C: With all the characters you've played in TV and film, is there one that you find yourself coming back to more than the rest?

DC: I can't pick one. I'm very fortunate in that I've been able to be in a lot of quality movies and TV shows, and theater as well. I've been very lucky to play a lot of interesting and rewarding characters, from Mouse [in *Devil in a Blue Dress*] — that's one where you're like, wow, that was cool to be able to do that with Denzel. Talk to Me, playing Petey Green. Paul Rusesabagina in *Hotel Rwanda*. Even Basher in the *Ocean's* trilogy.

I could go down the line. It's hard to pick one. All of them, for different reasons, bring a smile to my face because of the experience, the people I got to work with, the project overall.

We create these little nuclear families and then go off to the corners of the Earth. It's cool to have had the ability to do that with so many talented people over the years. Thirty-plus years I've been doing it — I'm very blessed. ●





REVIEW

'MARVEL'S M.O.D.O.K.'

(Premieres May 21 on Hulu)

ANIMATED COMEDY *Marvel's M.O.D.O.K.* is about a supervillain, voiced by Patton Oswalt, with plans to conquer the world. Those plans are throttled by M.O.D.O.K.'s mismanagement of his evil corporation, A.I.M. Short for Mental Organism Designed Only for Killing, M.O.D.O.K. also has a problematic domestic life, as his wife and kids are fed up with Dad's self-centered ways.

Aiming to acquire ailing A.I.M. is a tech behemoth called GRUMBL that is run by a goofily woke tech maven, Austin. Beck Bennett of *Saturday Night Live* voices Austin.

M.O.D.O.K. has the shape of a soup can and rides around in a hoverchair. Inspired by a comic book franchise, the jokes on *Marvel's M.O.D.O.K.* come fast and furious. The second episode, entitled "The M.O.D.O.K. That Time Forgot!," sees M.O.D.O.K. and his wife Jodie (voiced by Aimee Garcia) travel back in time to see Third Eye Blind in college, M.O.D.O.K. hoping it will bring the couple back to more carefree days.

Alas, the pair goes too far back. "We overshot Third Eye Blind and we're in the year of Chumbawumba!" grouses M.O.D.O.K.

Melissa Fumero of *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* voices daughter Melissa, Ben Schwartz from *Parks and Recreation* voices son Lou and Wendy McLendon-Covey of *The Goldbergs* portrays A.I.M. scientist extraordinaire Monica.

Marvel's M.O.D.O.K. offers some fun, futuristic tech toys to behold, and Oswalt brings the portly supervillain to life with acerbic wit. The suburban ennui in *Marvel's M.O.D.O.K.* at times calls to mind *WandaVision* on Disney Plus, though they're entirely different series. Some of the many *M.O.D.O.K.* quips hit their mark, but most, at least for this viewer, did not.

Oswalt created the show with Jordan Blum, and both are executive producers along with Jeph Loeb and several others. — MM

'Zombie Protein' Infects America In 'The Bite'

Robert and Michelle King's Spectrum Originals series has six episodes on May 21



By Michael Malone
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Robert and Michelle King series *The Bite* premieres for Spectrum video subscribers May 21. The show follows neighbors Rachel (Audra McDonald) and Lily (Taylor Schilling) after a deadly strain of a virus turns up. Rachel and Lily both start working from home in New York, trying to keep their lives together as things start to go crazy.

Robert described the strain of virus as a "zombie protein" that attaches itself to COVID. Those who catch the virus may undergo some changes. "You will not be disappointed if you tune in looking for zombies," teased Michelle.

A mix of drama and comedy with lots of satire as well, *The Bite* touches on the political issues surrounding COVID, masks and vaccinations. "I don't think it's a stretch to say the pandemic has been politicized," said Robert, mentioning the idea of "civilization being lost because it can't get its shit together."

The show's title is a nod to the undead. "Jaws and teeth are the most important part of any zombie show," explained Robert.

The Kings penned the

Audra McDonald in Spectrum Originals series *The Bite*.

project last summer. With Broadway on hold amidst the pandemic, the creators said they reached out to stage friends to get on board with *The Bite*.

With infection rates decreasing today, they're hoping people can find a bit of humor in the horror we've all been through. "We'd love for everybody in the pandemic to have a laugh or two," said Robert.

Spectrum and CBS Studios produce the series. The Kings' hits include *The Good Wife* and *The Good Fight*. CBS and Paramount Plus are their usual partners, but neither got on board with *The Bite*. "Spectrum seemed to be willing to pull the trigger," said Robert.

All six episodes are available, commercial free, for Spectrum subscribers on premiere day.

Scenes were shot on sets in New York and in cast members' homes. Characters played by McDonald and Steven Pasquale are both involved in extramarital affairs, and the actors' real-life spouses portray their fling partners.

Michelle mentioned a "wait-and-see attitude" in terms of subsequent seasons.

"We created the show so there is the possibility of multiple seasons," she said, while also giving the first season a satisfying conclusion.

The Bite is a big, bold swing for the Kings. "We didn't really know how well the show would pan out," Michelle said. "We're both really proud of it. It came out better than I could've dreamed." ●



INSP Rounds Up Audiences With Western-Themed Shows

TV comfort food feeds the viewing needs of network's 50-plus viewers



By R. Thomas Umstead
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INSP has experienced a record-setting ratings start to 2021, which landed the independent cable network among the 15 most-watched services in primetime during the first quarter, ahead of outlets such as Lifetime, A&E, FX, Bravo and AMC. INSP has successfully reached its target audience of viewers 50-plus with a mix of comfort fare, including vintage Westerns like *Gunsmoke*, *The Virginian* and *Bonanza*; original reality show *Ultimate Cowboy Showdown*, hosted by Trace Adkins; and documentary series *Wild West Chronicles*. INSP president and CEO Dale Ardizzone recently spoke to B+C/MCN about the network's record-setting ratings success as well as its prospects for continued post-pandemic audience growth.

B+C: What drove INSP's ratings success during the pandemic?

Dale Ardizzone: We really have enjoyed tremendous success over the last year. It was a difficult year and, as all of us did across the country, we sort of held our breath in March, April and May as we tried to weather through all of this. What we found that was interesting is that during that period, our ratings dipped a bit during the day but remain very strong in the evening.

Our sense was that a lot of our viewers were obviously watching the news every day and trying to learn more about what was going on, but by early evening were looking for a place to relax and get

comfortable programming that they love and trust. So, from a ratings standpoint, we were able to weather the storm, so to speak. One of the things we were able to do successfully was to show advertisers how loyal our viewers were and how INSP was still a very viable place for them to talk about their products.

We serve an audience of what we call cord-cuddlers, not cord-cutters. Our folks are not cutting the cord, but rather look to traditional cable as a real primary source of their entertainment, so our ratings continue to grow, our engagement continues to grow and we feel very good about the future.

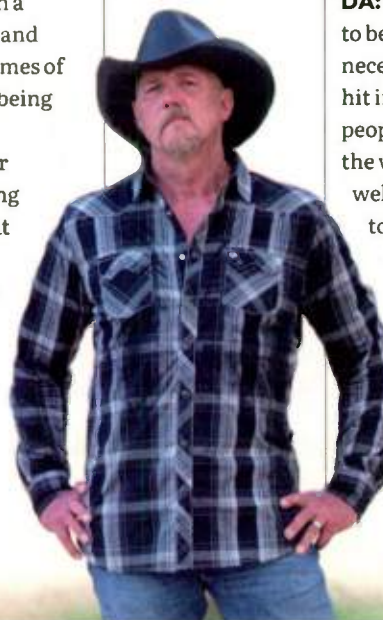
B+C: How would you represent INSP's brand?

DA: We have narrowed our focus to content that stands for certain principles in terms of justice, heroic characters and, in most instances, good triumphing over evil. That's one of the reasons that we think that the classic Westerns have resonated so well with our audience. These are stories that are built on a conflict with a heroic character, and there are usually underlying themes of justice and in the end of wrongs being righted.

We've really found that for our audience, seeing those underlying themes in a Western, and in what we call Western-adjacent formats, has helped us fine-tune where we're headed. Even our originals have a Western, cowboy feel and a theme to them, whether it's about doing right by people in their town or in their family, or just



INSP president and Dale Ardizzone (top) has built audience during the pandemic with Western-themed shows such as *Ultimate Cowboy Showdown*, hosted by country music star Trace Adkins (below).



in their dealings. That has allowed us to narrow down our scope and our approach.

B+C: Do you have any plans to move the brand toward the streaming platform?

DA: Most of our original content premieres on our linear channel, and some on other distribution platforms. We are active on a number of those platforms with our content, but we have not launched our own service as of yet. It's something we continue to look at and evaluate. I'm a believer that the ecosystem is very complex with lots of opportunity in different places. Our viewers are not cutting the cord and going to these other places, so for us, our core audience continues to remain linear.

B+C: Will INSP be able to maintain its ratings momentum post-pandemic, as more people go out and potentially spend less time watching TV?

DA: We think our content will continue to be a driver for consumers, and it's not necessarily going to take a tremendous hit in ratings or popularity even though people are getting out more, which by the way we think is great. We're all welcoming the need to start to get back to normalcy, although I think it's a cautious return now.

We're all excited about getting back outside and being engaged, but I think for most of the folks that we hear from — and certainly for a lot of our viewers — it's going to be a cautious return. ●

REVIEW

HACKS

(Started May 13 on HBO Max)

HBO MAX EXPLORES the complex relationship between an aging comedian and an up-and-coming writer in its new dramedy *Hacks*.

The series stars Jean Smart (*Watchmen*) as Deborah Vance, a legendary comic who is at a crossroads in her career as a Las Vegas entertainer.

Despite her achievements and wealth — the pilot episode explores Deborah's huge mansion outside of Vegas with all the trappings of success — she's on the verge of losing her Las Vegas residency to younger performers and music acts like Pentatonix. Fed up with the disrespect, she reaches out to her agent (Paul Downs) to rectify the situation.

Instead, he hooks Deborah up with a rising but toxic 25-year-old comedy writer,

Ava (Hannah Einbinder), who has been blacklisted from Hollywood after texting an inappropriate joke about the sexual liaisons of a congressman. Desperate for a job, Ava reluctantly flies out to Las Vegas to meet with Deborah, who has no interest in hiring a joke writer and is not aware the meeting with Ava has been arranged.

The collaboration quickly devolves

Hannah Einbinder (l.) and Jean Smart in HBO Max series *Hacks*.



into a tit for tat of insults as the two comedians with polar opposite personalities go at it and a frustrated and disgusted Ava storms out of the house. Just as quickly as Ava leaves, Deborah reconsiders and decides to work with the young writer.

The interactions between the older, established Deborah and the younger, more free-spirited Ava throughout the series create some humorous and unusual situations, including an adventurous car ride in the desert during one of the early episodes. The relationship between the two begins to evolve over time after both realize that they need each other to overcome the obstacles in their careers.

Hacks also stars Carl Clemons-Hopkins, Kaitlin Olson, Christopher McDonald, Mark Indelicato, Poppy Liu and Meg Stalter.

HBO Max began streaming the first two episodes of the 10-episode season May 13, adding two additional episodes over the subsequent four weeks. — RTU

REVIEW

TULSA BURNING: THE 1921 RACE MASSACRE

(History, Sunday, May 30 at 8 p.m. ET)

HISTORY COMMEMORATES the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa, Oklahoma, race massacre with a powerful and poignant documentary that examines arguably the worst racial incident in U.S. history.

The documentary, *Tulsa Burning: The 1921 Race Massacre*, doesn't sugarcoat what happened a century ago to Black residents of Tulsa's Greenwood District, but rather skillfully dissects the events that led up to the burning by white supremacists of more than 35 blocks of what was then known as Black Wall Street. The documentary uses excellent and rare footage that summarizes the mood

of the period — including graphic footage of lynchings that occurred in Oklahoma at the time as well as around the country — along with images and video from the brutal massacre itself, in which historians estimate as many as 300 Black people were killed.

Among the highlights of the documentary are interviews with some of the survivors who provide a chilling account of what really happened, as well as the disappointment over the lack of accountability from local law enforcement officials and elected leaders to punish those who devastated one of the most prosperous African-American communities

***Tulsa Burning* is a deep dive into the events of the 1921 massacre that destroyed the city's Greenwood neighborhood.**



in the country. As one historian painfully remarked early in the documentary, not one person has been arrested or held accountable for the incident.

History also successfully weaves the racial unrest of the 1920s with today's Black Lives Matter movement while showcasing Tulsa's 2020 efforts to uncover the bodies of African-Americans killed during the massacre.

Basketball star Russell Westbrook, who played for the Oklahoma City Thunder during his first 11 years in the NBA, serves as executive producer of the documentary, which offers a fascinating, entertaining and informative account of one of the most tragic, yet still largely unknown, moments in America. — RTU





Texas Capital Still Weird, Still Booming

Snowmageddon in the rear view, Austin is back on its feet



By Michael Malone
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It's been a challenging year-plus, to say the least, but things are slowly getting back to normal in the Texas capital. Besides the pandemic, Austin was hit with a snowstorm in February that knocked power out and shut off the water for many residents. But the fair weather is here and Austin's many attributes, including live music along Sixth Street and lots of outdoor activity, are approaching full swing.

"The market is as hot as it's ever been,"

said Michael Lewis, KTBC senior VP and general manager. "Sixth Street is not as alive as it was, but it's getting there."

Fox owns KTBC. Nexstar Media Group has NBC affiliate KXAN, MyNetworkTV-aligned KBVO and manages The CW



There's such a large diversity of cultures, with the music and food scene, Austin never gets boring."

— **Christine Escobar**,
 president and general manager, KAKW-KTFO

KXAN meteorologist Kristen Currie gives a weather update from downtown Austin.

outlet KNVA. Sinclair Broadcast Group has CBS station KEYE and runs Telemundo on a dot-two channel. Tegna owns ABC affiliate KVUE. Univision owns KAKW and UniMás station KTFO.

Spectrum is the primary pay TV operator. The market jumped from Nielsen's No. 40 to No. 38 in 2021. Austin adds around 169 residents a day. The city finally has a professional sports team, as Austin FC joined Major League Soccer. The Nexstar stations own the English-language game rights, with most matches on KNVA. Things kicked off with an April 24 win over Colorado.

"It's got this huge, positive enthusiasm and buzz," said Eric Lassberg, VP and general manager of KXAN-KNVA-KBVO. "I've never seen anything like it. Everyone is just fired up."

Univision Austin has the Spanish-language rights to Austin FC, with games on KTFO. "It's a big deal because we have so much soccer passion in the market," Christine Escobar, KAKW-KTFO president and general manager, said.

KXAN is a ratings beast. In March, KXAN won the 6 a.m. households race, while KTBC was tops in the 25-54 demo. The stations split the 5 p.m. battle, and KXAN won households and 25-54 at 6 p.m. At 10 p.m., KXAN scored a 4.3 in

households, ahead of KVUE's and KEYE's 2.7, KTBC's 2.2, KAKW's 1.3 and the local Telemundo's 0.8. In the 10 p.m. demo, KXAN earned a 1.8, KVUE a 1.6, KTBC a 1.4, KAKW a 1.2 and KEYE and Telemundo 0.8 apiece.

Station Goes 'In-Depth'

KXAN has "In-Depth Investigation" as its branding and reminds viewers of it often. "Every single promo you see, we pound it into the minds of viewers," Lassberg said.

KXAN won two National Murrow Awards last year, an extraordinary accomplishment for a station. Jim Spencer, chief meteorologist, shifted to semi-retirement after 31 years at the station. David Yeomans became KXAN chief meteorologist in March.

KTBC offers a relentless local news approach, cranking out 53 hours a week. A 6 p.m. newscast came on board in 2019, often giving the full 30 minutes to a specific topic, whether it's homelessness, COVID or a transportation bill. "We do it when the topic says we should," said Lewis. "It's dictated by the news of the day."

Lewis mentioned that President Lyndon B. Johnson and wife Lady Bird once owned the station. "The spirit of service and giving back to our community is still alive and well," he said.

Escobar oversees the Univision and UniMás stations as well as a pair of radio outlets. Staffers from TV and radio are "cross-trained," as Escobar puts it, to



Shannon Ryan (above) and Kacey Bowen covered Austin's dangerous winter storms for Fox station KTBC.

work in both. Radio hosts, for instance, provide entertainment highlights for Austin viewers on Fridays. "We're all Swiss Army knives here," said Escobar.

KAKW has two hours of morning news, a midday newscast, and 5 p.m. and 10 p.m. news. Saturdays are being considered for expansion. "News is what drives the ratings and the revenue," said Escobar. "It's always something we're looking to expand on."

Streaming local news on a mobile app has expanded the consumer base for Univision Austin content.

Weathering Snowmageddon

The stations had their hands full when the snow hit in mid February. Referred to as Snowmageddon, the issue wasn't so much the snow, but the havoc that followed, including power outages. Escobar called the storm a once in a lifetime event, and hopes it stays that way. "Nobody wants to go back to that period," she said. (An Austin native, Escobar named her son Austin.)

Austin's mix of hot companies, including Tesla and Apple, an influx of new residents and a burgeoning music scene keeps the market on its toes. Slogan "Keep Austin Weird" reflects the independent mindset here.

"There's such a large diversity of cultures," said Escobar. "With the music and food scene, Austin never gets boring." ●



KXAN's Amanda Dugan (l.) and Kristen Currie do double duty on KNVA.

CW AFFILIATE KNVA MAKES NEWS PUSH

KXAN IS A local news titan, and is spreading the wealth on sister KNVA. The CW station has long had a 9 p.m. newscast. Robert Hadlock and Sydney Benter anchor, and Roger Wallace hosts *More Than the Score*, a sports segment that goes from 9:45 to 10 p.m.

In September, KNVA launched weekday morning news, 7-9 a.m. The newscast is called *KXAN Weather and Traffic*. Viewers "need up-to-the-minute information about weather and getting from point A to B," said KXAN news director Chad Cross when the show debuted. "We're making it quick and convenient, with this new, unique format of local weather and traffic coverage."

The newscast is anchored by meteorologists Kristen Currie and Mark Peña and traffic reporter Amanda Dugan. "It's all things weather and traffic," said Eric Lassberg, KXAN-KNVA-KBVO VP and general manager. "It's fun storytelling with a local perspective."

During commercials, L-bar graphics keep viewers informed on the latest in jams and storms.

"We've gotten great positive feedback from our viewers," Lassberg said. — MM



'Jeopardy!' EP Mike Richards: Guest Hosts Were Part Of Fans' Grieving Process

Season 38 will see a permanent host named to helm game show into future



By Paige Albiniak
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When iconic *Jeopardy!* host Alex Trebek died on Nov. 8, 2020, of stage 4 pancreatic cancer, the loss came as a shock to fans around the world even though Trebek had been talking openly about his diagnosis for more than a year.

What came next had to be handled delicately, but luckily for *Jeopardy!*, new-ish executive producer Mike Richards had a plan in place. By the time the show ran out of new episodes with Trebek at the podium, Richards had established a lineup of respected guest hosts to take the show into its next era, including Ken Jennings, Katie Couric, Aaron Rodgers, Mayim Bialik, Anderson Cooper, Dr. Mehmet Oz, George Stephanopoulos, Robin Roberts, LeVar Burton and several more.

The transition has been a fair amount of work for Richards and the team of pros at Sony Pictures Television's long-running game show, but the process has also had its own rewards. *Jeopardy!* has been syndication's top-rated game show for almost all of 2021, despite the loss of Trebek.

In this Q&A with B+C/Multichannel News, Richards talks about why the show went with guest hosts, how he

and his team got them up to speed, why he ended up behind the podium himself and what comes next for *Jeopardy!* as it heads into season 38.

B+C: Did you always know you were going to rely on guest hosts whenever Alex's run ended?

Mike Richards: Using guest hosts was always the plan. Going into even an interim host would have been difficult for the fans as well as difficult for us, the show's production and everyone who cared about Alex. That process needed time and it needed to have a variety of different people — fans, producers, focus groups — narrow in on all of it. What was it exactly that we wanted out of our next *Jeopardy!* host? We knew that we wouldn't be able to find the next Alex Trebek, because that doesn't exist, so what was it exactly that we were looking for?

B+C: So what were you looking for?

MR: Very early on, we came up with a list of qualities that this person should have. The list wasn't about what they shouldn't be, knowing that no one would check every box. We wanted them to be credible, to have a good voice, to feel like they were caring for the contestants and

EP Mike Richards took a turn hosting *Jeopardy!* while setting up Alex Trebek's would-be heirs for success.

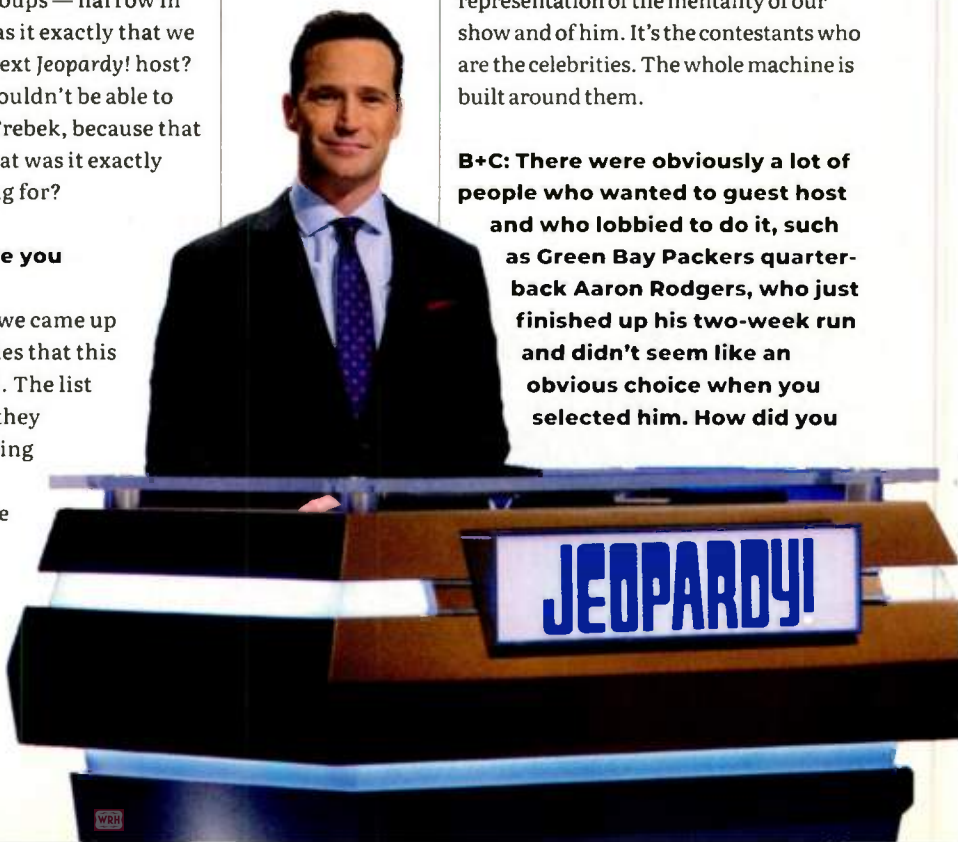
on the contestants' side, and to present the show in a manner deserving of *Jeopardy!* It was a number of things like that, plus they needed to have a little bit of a sense of humor.

B+C: I feel like humor is one of the most important qualities to look for.

MR: I don't know that it's the most important. If you aren't a great broadcaster, don't have a great voice, aren't a great arbiter of the game, then being funny doesn't matter, but it definitely is an important part. I always think that a great host in some way reflects the audience and is looked at to say, 'Wow, that was amazing.' The host's job is to heighten the moment, increase the tension, lighten the mood — their job is to reflect the audience's mood and heighten the experience. This is not someone who is necessarily going head to head with the contestants. It's someone who lets the contestants shine and in letting them shine, they shine.

I grew up watching Johnny Carson; that is an important thing to look at. Alex was brilliant at it. [Alex] was never introduced as the star of *Jeopardy!*, he was always the host of *Jeopardy!* That is such a representation of the mentality of our show and of him. It's the contestants who are the celebrities. The whole machine is built around them.

B+C: There were obviously a lot of people who wanted to guest host and who lobbied to do it, such as Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers, who just finished up his two-week run and didn't seem like an obvious choice when you selected him. How did you



handle those asks, and how did you make your choices?

MR: *Jeopardy!* is maybe the toughest show on TV to host. It's so intense and you have to think quickly on your feet. The host of *Jeopardy!* is the person who reads every piece of content and who calls on the person who rings in and does it in a split second. That's so important because if you wait, the show becomes so slow. It is so intense and mentally taxing to host the show and to manage it. It really came down to who could do it.

With Rodgers, you start to look at what I looked at with him — such as how he has been described by teammates and coaches, how does he make split-second decisions, does he stay calm, can he be coached? I also went back and watched him on *Celebrity Jeopardy!* and I really thought the guy could do it even though he had done barely any broadcasting.

B+C: How are you going to choose the next host and does that job fall on you? Also, was all of this just a ruse so that you could choose yourself at the end, like Dick Cheney running for vice president?

MR: We are going to look at everyone and consider the data and analytics, testing and focus groups and ultimately who we think the correct person is in the long term. My role is not to choose the person, my role is to make everyone as great as they can be in the role. Look at how Aaron was received or how [CNN's] Anderson [Cooper] has been received — our production and producers are doing a very good job of giving them great looks. That's the goal: Make everyone look great. Ultimately, the team at Sony will decide what they think is the right thing for the show.

We aren't looking for a three-year host, we're looking for a 10-year or a 20-year host. Stability is one of the show's strengths, so we need to consider who's got a 20-year horizon and who can focus on the show and make it great over that time.

As for me hosting, I was never meant



This is not someone who is necessarily going head to head with the contestants. It's someone who lets the contestants shine and in letting them shine, they shine.

— Mike Richards, executive producer, *Jeopardy!*



CNN anchor Anderson Cooper (top) and Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers took their turns behind the *Jeopardy!* podium in April.

to be a part of that process — I was just meant to manage — but COVID had other plans. Sony will ask me how people are in the studio and how their days on set went, so I will be part of that conversation, but there's a bigger group of stakeholders who will weigh in. My job is really to make everyone really good at this. The shoot days are brutal, because teaching someone the show is intense. We give everything we can to them to let them shine and then we serve it up.

B+C: How well have people been prepared when they came in to guest host?

MR: People have approached this in many different ways. Some have barely watched the show and then come in and worked hard on rehearsal day. Then there are people who watched hours and hours of tape and went back and looked at things. It's been very different how people have prepared. I have had all different levels of questions.

What has been common to everyone is that there is a humility that no matter what you've done before, when you walk in that door and stand behind that lectern, you are stepping into something incredibly difficult. No one has been in any way arrogant about it. These are all very successful people — they have moderated presidential debates, interviewed world leaders, won Super Bowls — and hosting this game has humbled all of them. It's a real testament

to the brand and to what Alex did. Every single host at some point in their opening monologue has said this is so much harder than I realized.

B+C: Michael Gelman, longtime executive producer of *Live with Kelly and Ryan*, has been through this guest-host process two times and both times the search has resulted in higher ratings for *Live*. Did you talk to him at all about how to do this?

MR: I did call Michael Gelman and we did talk this through. He is the best and even though I had never talked to him before I thought, 'I don't have to think this through on my own, why don't I give him a call?'

We were on the phone for an hour and he was like, 'Here are the upsides and the downsides.' The best part of the guest-host process is that the audience isn't seeing them for the first time when you announce the final host so it's not a complete shock to the system. That's important psychologically to the audience, especially because some people are going to be upset no matter who you pick.

Gelman also said, 'You are going to get bad press, so you have to be ready for it.' And then it dies down, and the fans come back. Also, whoever you pick will get beat up, it doesn't matter who it is, so that person has to be resilient. That was what happened to Drew Carey on *The Price Is Right*. He got destroyed for years and then at some point, everyone looked up and was like, 'Oh Drew Carey, I really like that guy.' That's exactly what will happen here.

B+C: Will you have a permanent host in place by the time season 38 premieres or do you plan to have guest hosts next season as well?

MR: By the end of July or early August, we will have a permanent host in place. Some of the episodes won't have aired before we make this decision, but we've already been doing lots of research on all of the guest hosts. ●

Cinedigm's Strategy For Streaming Starts to Pay Off

Company plans to launch new channels, expand into digital businesses



By Jon Lafayette
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There's a lot going on at Cinedigm, which, through a recent series of acquisitions, has built itself into a clean, mean streaming machine.

Cinedigm has plans to expand its footprint with new channels. Some of those may be built around iconic pop celebrities (think Elvis Presley or Marilyn Monroe) with estates that want to leverage their brands with linear or on-demand channels. Cinedigm is also looking to build networks around some of the best-known sports leagues and teams.

With viewers cutting the cord and the opportunities for subscriber fees melting away, Cinedigm wants to be the catalyst for taking lower-tier cable networks over the top.

In March, Cinedigm said it reached 23.8 million viewers, up 208% from last year. It streamed 423 million minutes, up 305%. Total subscribers to its streaming services topped 640,000, up 574%.

"We're really well-positioned for growth now both organically and through our acquisition strategy," chairman and CEO Chris McGurk said.

Beyond streaming, Cinedigm is eyeing live experiences, virtual screenings and podcasts, and it has 10,000 digital comics in its library.

Cinedigm is also going to jump into the hot market for non-fungible tokens. NFTs



are units of data stored on a digital ledger, called a blockchain, which certifies those assets to be unique and (unlike, say, bitcoin) not interchangeable.

"If we're not in the NFT business, which we think is a big, big business with our team of engineers and our digital expertise, there's something wrong with us," McGurk said. "We have an enormous amount of collectible content," he added, pointing to 10,000 digital comics and a library of tens of thousands of films and TV episodes.

Cinedigm will use the NFTs to build a loyalty program for its subscription business, he said.

A Digital First-Mover

Cinedigm has been in the middle of the digitization of the entertainment industry since it was founded 21 years ago, originally converting movie theaters from film to digital projection.

"The challenge for the company was, how do you take the digital technology and

Above: Cinedigm acquired Screambox with plans to relaunch the horror-themed service.

Below: Cinedigm holds the rights to Boonie Bears: The Wild Life, which grossed some \$90 million in China.



expertise that was in the company's DNA and its relationships and convert that into a growth business?" said McGurk, who became CEO in 2011. Netflix and Hulu had already launched, and Cinedigm started to turn itself from a digital home-entertainment company into a streaming company through a series of acquisitions that brought it technology and content. It started streaming in 2015. It also sold off most of its non-streaming assets.

"We make money off the streaming ecosystem in more ways than anybody," McGurk said. Cinedigm's channels are a mix of subscription, ad-supported VOD and free ad-supported linear television (FAST) channels. They bring in both advertising and subscription revenues.

On top of that, Cinedigm has a large library of digital rights to movies that it sells to Amazon, Netflix and everyone else. "That business is going great guns," McGurk said.

Cinedigm also sells its streaming technology, called MatchPoint. "It really gives us a leg up on everybody else," he said.

In one of its recent deals, Cinedigm bought out Foundation TV, its partner in developing MatchPoint. "We wanted to control all that IP and be able to direct the effort to take everything to another level on a global basis," McGurk said.

In 2017, Bison Capital Holding Co. China bought an 80% stake in Cinedigm. Earlier this year, it announced that Chinese investors now own less than 20% of the company. Being Chinese-owned would have subjected Cinedigm to more stringent regulation, making its acquisition strategy more difficult to execute, McGurk said.

The deal also left Cinedigm with a stronger balance sheet and less debt, he said.

In its fiscal third-quarter ending in December, Cinedigm lost \$9.7 million on revenues of \$10 million. At this point, McGurk said, the company has streamlined its operation and is investing in growth, rather than prioritizing positive cash flow.

Cinedigm is becoming a “clean, mean, streaming machine with global dreams,” The Benchmark Co. equity research analyst Daniel Kurnos said in a report issued in February.

Worldwide Ambitions

A year ago, Kurnos said, Cinedigm was majority owned by Chinese investors and had a tiny streaming business. “Cinedigm has completely flipped the script, featuring a strong net cash (nearly recourse debt-free) balance sheet, a much cleaner ownership structure and posting fiscal third-quarter results which significantly exceed expectations,” he said.

“All this leaves Cinedigm, in our view, with a stronger negotiating position to continue and potentially accelerate their streaming acquisition roll-up strategy, which has already paid dividends in the fourth quarter,” Kurnos added. “Layer in a rapidly growing international linear opportunity and a long-awaited EBITDA [earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization] pivot, and it feels like the party is just getting started.”

Cinedigm has been building distribution for its roughly 17 streaming channels. Unlike Netflix or The Walt Disney Co., Cinedigm’s channels are more niche. “We believe we are completely complementary to the big general-entertainment channels,” Cinedigm chief strategy officer Erick Opeka said.

The company calls them “enthusiast channels” for fans of documentary, indie films, horror movies, documentaries and anime. While Netflix makes a few thousand horror movies available, that’s just a fraction of the 125,000 that have been made.

“If you love horror, you want to be super-served with curation and deep, deep libraries,” Opeka said. “The major services are a mile wide and an inch deep, but we’re going to go very deep.”

Reopening Screambox

Speaking of horror, Cinedigm will be relaunching Screambox, which it acquired in February. It is also putting together a bigger and better Fandor, a



Cinedigm CEO Chris McGurk (top) and chief strategy officer Erik Opeka.

Below: Cinedigm is working with the estate of the late Bob Ross on new original content for its Bob Ross Channel.

subscription service it bought in January. Other recent acquisitions include The Film Detective and the Films Around the World library.

Cinedigm’s Chinese connections paid off in April, when the company launched a new streaming channel with Fantawild, a large Chinese theme-park operator and a major animation company there. The channel launched on sets made by Chinese manufacturer TCL, FreeCast and Kloud TV.

The latest film in Fantawild’s Boonie Bears franchise, *Boonie Bears: The Wild Life*, which grossed \$90 million at the box office in China, will be released by Cinedigm for digital purchase and rental before landing on the new linear channel.

Cinedigm is starting to dip its toe into putting original shows on its platforms, Opeka said. The company announced last month that the thriller *The Island* from ZDF Enterprises will debut exclusively on Screambox.

Cinedigm plans to continue adding exclusively licensed international productions and getting involved in co-productions. “We’re probably going to ramp that business up,” Opeka said. “We have five or six other potential opportunities on that front.”

The Bob Ross Channel, which has become Cinedigm’s most successful offering, might get some original programming. The company is talking to the estate of the iconic longtime host of PBS’s *The Joy of Painting* about new shows that could be produced at low cost, Opeka said.

Although niche, Opeka thinks the types of channels Cinedigm is building

can become substantial.

“They could end up having tens of millions of subscribers globally, or dozens of monthly viewers, in an ad-supported environment,” he said. “And these are things that transcend borders.”

He pointed to the success of niche services like Crunchyroll and BritBox. “Those are really nice businesses,” he said. Crunchyroll is in the process of being sold by AT&T to Sony’s Funimation for \$1.2 billion. AT&T regarded Crunchyroll as a distraction.

“If billion-dollar businesses are a distraction, we want to be in the distraction business,” Opeka said.

Growing Concern

With its growth, Cinedigm has been hiring at a time when many companies in the entertainment business have been cutting thousands of staffers loose.

“We’re going to double the size of our workforce by 2022,” McGurk said. “So we’re able to bring a lot of new talented people into the company now to help take the company to another level because we’re growing by leaps and bounds.”

Growth will continue if cord-cutting continues or, as Opeka expects, accelerates.

Opeka said the best things on traditional pay TV — even sports — are moving to streaming as the big media companies cherry-pick their assets to feed their new direct-to-consumer businesses.

While many predict pay TV will bottom out with 50 million to 60 million subscribers, “I think it’s more like 35 million to 40 million and I’m obviously bullish on streaming,” Opeka said.

Streaming might even be the answer for cable channels desperately trying to hold onto their subscriber fees. Opeka said Cinedigm can reimagine cable channels with strong brands as FAST networks.

“You look at the bottom tier of the cable universe and there are hundreds of channels globally that will eventually lose their carriage fee-based deals and they’re going to have to make a choice,” he said. “Either they adapt to the new FAST and on-demand and subscription environment, or they shut down.” ●



Cable Knocks on Wireless Giants' Door

CBRS spectrum could help make mobile service cheaper; 5G could vault ops into contention



By Mike Farrell
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Cable operators may not be an imminent threat to the Big Three wireless carriers, Verizon, AT&T and T-Mobile. After four years of tapping on the front door, though, they may be closer than ever to knocking it down, with help from Citizens Band Radio Service (CBRS) and 5G mobile spectrum.

Since Comcast launched its Xfinity Mobile service in 2017, via a mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) agreement with Verizon Communications, cable wireless amassed nearly 6 million subscribers, making it the industry's fastest growth product in terms of percentages. Cable's biggest wireless rise was in 2020, when top cable operators Comcast, Charter and Altice USA, fueled in part by pandemic-driven increases in broadband, grew their wireless customers at a 68% clip. That momentum continued into Q1 2021, with those three operators growing their total wireless lines to 5.9 million, a 9% increase.

Comcast broke records in the wireless business in Q1, adding 278,000 lines—its most ever in a quarter—while the Xfinity Mobile unit reached cash-flow breakeven (it didn't lose money) for the first time since its launch. Wireless revenue rose nearly 50% in the quarter to \$513 million, further solidifying the company's wireless commitment.

The news was just as good for Charter, which added 300,000 wireless customers in Q1. Altice USA added about 5,000 wireless customers in Q1.

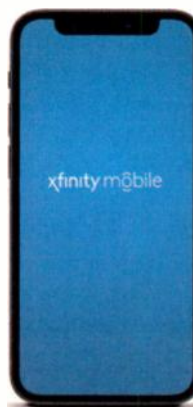


Comcast still leads the pack with 3.1 million mobile subscribers, followed by Charter—which also has a MVNO agreement with Verizon—with 2.6 million and Altice USA with 174,000. Altice USA was the last to launch a mobile service (Altice Mobile) through an MVNO pact with T-Mobile, in September 2019.

Those cable companies are still a long way from being an immediate threat to wireless' Big Three: AT&T leads with 164 million postpaid wireless customers, followed by Verizon with 117 million and T-Mobile, which completed its \$26 billion purchase of Sprint in 2019, has 67 million. But as pricing continues to be one of the biggest deciding factors in selecting a mobile service, and many cable wireless customers are also hardwire broadband subscribers, the gap is poised to close rapidly. Add in the potential of 5G mobile service—which depends greatly on fiber interconnections between towers, a cable strong suit—and the notion that cable wireless could become a major player isn't that much of a stretch.

Skeptics need look no further than the dominant position cable has carved out

It was a successful Q1 for both Charter's Spectrum Mobile (above) and Comcast's Xfinity Mobile (below).



in broadband service. In the beginning, telcos ruled the day with copper wire digital subscriber line service, offering 1.5 Mbps speeds that in the 1990s were a major upgrade from dial-up. But as cable continued to deploy fiber deep into its network, and speed requirements vaulted into the hundreds of megabits per second, cable broadband quickly overtook its DSL competition. Today, cable accounts for about 70% of the U.S. broadband market, a number expected to grow as operators push fiber out to the edges of their footprints.

Broadband Sets Precedent

Cable operators have been edging out their footprints at an accelerated pace over the past few years. In 2020, Comcast added about 1 million homes passed to its footprint, with Charter adding about 1.1 million homes. Even at 30% penetration rates, that could translate into about 300,000 more broadband customers. And increasingly, cable operators seem anxious to add wireless to that bundle, which could drive those numbers as well.

As many as 90% of cable wireless customers are also cable broadband customers, said Evercore ISI media analyst Vijay Jayant. Extending that broadband reach can only help the cause for wireless.

In its Q4 conference call with analysts, Comcast chief financial officer Mike Cavanagh said mobile is a "strategic priority" for the company and has been "fully integrated" into the core business. Xfinity Mobile added 774,000 wireless customers in 2020, slightly behind the 816,000 added in 2019, all during a period where most of its retail stores were closed because of the pandemic. Those outlets were fully open this year and as a result expected to have a positive impact on sales.

Did they ever. Xfinity Mobile reported its best quarterly subscriber additions yet in Q1: 278,000 versus 216,000 adds in Q1 2020.

Many analysts are beginning to see wireless as a replacement for video in the overall cable bundle. As video subscribers continue to cut the cord for streaming services but keep their cable broadband connection, adding wireless service could

keep the price of broadband more manageable. According to Bernstein, penetration for the video/broadband double-play has fallen from about 63% in 2018 to 51% in 2020.

On its Q1 earnings conference call April 28, Comcast Cable president and CEO Dave Watson said that bundling broadband and wireless is something the company has done in the past and will continue to do.

“We think it’s good for broadband, it’s helping broadband, we’ve seen the results in terms of churn, and it’s just a growth engine for us, period,” Watson said of the wireless product. “We’re focusing on every sales channel. We’re going to be consistent with our approach. You’ll probably see a bit more packaging with broadband and mobile, but that’s not really different than anything that we’ve been doing.”

Lose Some, Win More

In a research note, Bernstein media analyst Peter Supino called the practice of shedding low-margin video service for higher-margin broadband the industry’s “losing to win” strategy.

“The downside is the potential loss of ‘stickiness’ as a result of moving to a single offering,” he wrote. “Mobile is the potential cure.”

Supino added in other client notes that wireless is “far stickier” than video because the decision to switch internet/video providers is about a single item. It’s much harder to try to persuade every household member to change cellphone providers at the same time.

Wells Fargo Securities media analyst Steven Cahall estimated Comcast would add about 225,000 wireless customers in Q1 and 935,000 for the full year. That compares to his estimates of an increase of about 400,000 broadband subscribers in Q1 and 1.3 million for the full year.

Earlier this year, Comcast revised its Verizon MVNO agreement. It said in April it would drastically reduce pricing for its Xfinity Mobile service, offering four lines with unlimited data for \$120 per month. That price lines up with T-Mobile’s flagship Magenta service (\$140 per month with Netflix and taxes included) and

CABLE UNTETHERED

Wireless subscribers have soared in the cable business over the past few years, driven by low prices and increased availability, and should continue that pace for the next few years.

Subscribers (in millions)

	Q1 '19	Q2 '19	Q3 '19	Q4 '19	Q1 '20	Q2 '20	Q3 '20	Q4 '20	Q1 '21
COMCAST	1.4	1.6	1.8	2.1	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.8	3.1
CHARTER	0.3	0.5	0.8	1.1	1.4	1.7	2.0	2.3	2.6
ALTICE USA	N/A	N/A	0.015	0.07	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2
TOTAL	1.7	2.1	2.6	3.2	3.8	4.2	4.8	5.3	5.9

NOTE: Altice USA launched its mobile service in September, 2019 SOURCE: Company reports

UNRAVELING THE BUNDLE

Bundled penetration has fallen over the past few years, as video customers have cut the cord.

	Q1 '19	Q2 '19	Q3 '19	Q4 '19	Q1 '20	Q2 '20	Q3 '20	Q4 '20	Q1 '21
BUNDLE PENETRATION	63.4%	63.3%	62.7%	62.2%	61.5%	61%	60%	59%	51.1%

NOTE: Altice USA launched its mobile service in September, 2019 SOURCE: Company reports

severely undercuts comparable offerings from Verizon and AT&T that are priced above \$160 per month. Charter, which has an identical MVNO arrangement with Verizon, is expected to follow suit.

While the price reductions are likely to attract some additional customer interest, Bernstein’s Supino wrote, they don’t include phone discounts so they’re unlikely to have a huge impact on subscribers. But once Comcast achieves scale in phone equipment — which Supino predicted will occur in 2023 — and achieves even greater economies by shifting the bulk of traffic onto its CBRS spectrum, all bets are off.

“We expect Comcast (and Charter) to continue to reinvest wireless economies of scale in subscribers in order to drive total cable customer lifetime value,” Supino wrote. “By 2023, when we forecast that Comcast and Charter will have deployed

enough phones and small cells to make use of their recently acquired CBRS spectrum, we expect operating cost savings to fund more competitive phone promotions.”

Betting on CBRS

The cable companies have invested heavily in CBRS spectrum: Charter spent about \$465 million for 210 CBRS priority access licenses in the recent federal auction, while Comcast spent about \$459 million for 830 licenses, Supino said.

“CBRS spectrum and low-cost, strand-mounted small cells allow cable operators to build out their own facilities in dense areas,” Moffett wrote. “As much as 70% of all wireless traffic is handled by just 10% of cell sites. Cable will attempt to build out these dense areas (high ROI) with CBRS, leaving the less dense areas to the Verizon MVNO agreement, effectively arbitraging the wireless industry.

“Everything hinges on how much traffic can be offloaded onto CBRS,” Moffett said.

During the Q1 conference call, Comcast chairman and CEO Brian Roberts acknowledged the spectrum will be used to offload some traffic from the MVNO, adding that the ability to do so requires a strong wireless partner.

“Yes, we bought some spectrum and we’ll be doing some trials to see how we can offload, and that really will prove to be a cost savings if we get it right in dense areas,” Roberts said on the call. “That whole relationship requires a healthy partnership with a wireless [mobile network operator]. And in the case of Verizon, we were really pleased with the partnership.”

For 5G, Moffett wrote as networks get more dense, key to their success will be the fiber connections between towers, which are spaced much closer together in 5G architectures.

“As wireless networks densify, underlying wires will become the single most important part of the cost structure,” Moffett added. “As wires begin to dominate the cost structure, he who has the densest wired network will win. Cable has the densest network. Therefore, cable infrastructure will ultimately win in wireless. Just as it has already won in broadband.” ●

Collaboration's The Watchword for Broadcast's New Chief Cheerleader

Curtis LeGeyt prepares post-pandemic policy agenda as NAB's next president and CEO



By Gary Arlen
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@garyarlen

Two words recur frequently during a discussion with Curtis LeGeyt, the next president and CEO of the National Association of Broadcasters. They describe his operating vision: “bipartisan” and “collaborative.”

He also peppers conversations with media buzzwords — especially “disruptive” and “diversity” — reflecting the challenges that face an industry now buffeted by technology, pandemic economics and shifting demographics.

LeGeyt (pronounced Le-JET), who has been on the NAB staff since 2011, mostly as a senior government relations executive, became NAB's chief operating officer about a year ago. He will take over the top spot on Jan. 1, 2022, from Gordon Smith, who has held the post since 2009. LeGeyt believes the continuity from Smith to him will assure NAB's ability

NAB veteran Curtis LeGeyt has been tapped to succeed Gordon Smith atop the trade group in January.

to handle its swath of priorities, ranging from retransmission consent policies, spectrum usage and local journalism to ownership, ad tax and performance tax decisions.

“We approach advocacy from a bipartisan perspective,” he said.

LeGeyt sees a “nexus between journalism, ownership and tech competition,” which he cited as three major “interrelated” factors affecting the broadcasting industry.

“We hope Congress and the Federal Communications Commission understand the disruption” that these developments are causing, LeGeyt said during a telephone interview shortly after NAB revealed the succession plan in early April. He focused on the role that “local broadcasters have as gatekeepers for local audiences” compared to global technology providers.

LeGeyt also emphasized the need to “make sure that advertisers understand local broadcasters” can reach customers in better ways than online systems.

He said “one of the great silver linings” of the pandemic period was the “renewed

appreciation that local broadcasters can provide information about local businesses, schools, vaccine status” and other community needs. LeGeyt affirmed plans to collaborate with the News Media Alliance (once known as the Newspaper Association of America) to show policy-makers the value of local media.

Citing last month's Supreme Court decision on broadcast ownership rules, LeGeyt said “we're going to pull every thread to create a policy landscape” that appreciates “how much investment it takes to create a local news product” — a service global tech companies cannot provide, he contended.

Newspapers and broadcasters may have different business practices, LeGeyt added, but when it comes to the impact of local news, “our interests converge.”

“We both see a large part of our audience access or content on digital platforms,” he acknowledged, and the goal is not to stop the tech companies. But he wants to make sure that legislators and regulators remain aware of the importance of local sources. “The good news is that policymakers are extremely focused on this issue,” he said.

LeGeyt sees NAB's role as making sure that the industries work together to maintain that awareness and support.

First Democrat in 60 Years

LeGeyt's decade at NAB has solidified his perception of broadcasting's role in the evolving media landscape.

“You have a hyper-partisan cable news and digital ecosystem,” he said, acknowledging “a lot of distrust of media at large.”

“Our stations are emerging out of that,” LeGeyt explained, because audiences know that “local broadcasters are in the community.” Viewers and listeners “appreciate that,” he said.

LeGeyt came to NAB from the staff of Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.). He's the first Democrat to head the association since former Florida Sen. and Gov. LeRoy Collins held the post in the early 1960s. (Smith is a former Republican U.S. Senator from Oregon.) LeGeyt is only the sixth NAB president over six decades.



LeGeyt was attracted to join NAB a decade ago because of his background in antitrust and copyright law, after an undergraduate education in economics.

"The opportunity to leverage that background for an industry that is a cornerstone of American democracy was the real appeal," LeGeyt recalled. "There is no place where you sit at the intersection of so many issues that are so disruptive but are so critical.

"That's what brought me to NAB in the first place," he added. "That's the evolution in the time I've been here."

NAB did not run a traditional search committee process to select LeGeyt as its next president. He called his selection an "affirmation" of satisfaction for his work with Smith during the past decade and the value of continuity of leadership. He cited a nonpartisan ability to leverage relationships with lawmakers.

Smith's contract as president ran through 2023; he will become a senior adviser to the association for three more years (through 2024), available to help with "bipartisan advocacy," LeGeyt said. Smith plans to return to his Oregon home to help run the family food processing business and other projects but will be available for D.C. duties when needed.

Although NAB has not revealed LeGeyt's pay package, it is believed to match Smith's compensation. According to *CEO Update*, which tracks association executive salaries, Smith's recent annual base salary was just above \$2 million, with bonuses and perks bringing his total paycheck to about \$2.27 million per year.

Mixing Economics, Tech and Policy

The impact of streaming media is high on LeGeyt's issues agenda, citing its disruptive impact.

"We need to be where consumers are," he said. "Since viewers increasingly consume via streaming, we need to be accessible wherever and however they want us."

LeGeyt said part of his immediate mission is explaining the ways the pandemic has reshaped the media



There is no place where you sit at the intersection of so many issues that are so disruptive but are so critical.

— **Curtis LeGeyt**, next president and CEO, National Association of Broadcasters

landscape to policymakers.

"Ad dollars for broadcasters were tremendously stressed," he said. "That exposed some key elements of whom we're competing against. It added a sense of urgency, the need to confront the tech disruption.

"The most important thing we need to do is make sure that lawmakers understand clearly what broadcasters are facing, especially in the competition for ad dollars," he said. "We want to make sure lawmakers understand the challenge in this entire process," emphasizing the "challenge to remain forward-looking" to anticipate evolving technical platforms.

That's where NextGen TV, or ATSC 3.0, also high on LeGeyt's agenda, comes in. He said it will "assure that our station groups can invest in new tech, which is key to providing service."

Convention Plans And Personal Life

As for NAB's near-term agenda, LeGeyt followed up on recent explanations about the October plans for the NAB Show in Las Vegas. NAB executive VP of business

operations Chris Brown (who heads convention activities) recently laid out expectations for attendance at about 70% of 2019 levels and about 600 exhibitors (compared to more than 1,000 in April 2019).

"We're bullish about the October convention," LeGeyt said. "The demand is there. We're hearing from members and exhibitors who are yearning to be back in person." The combined convention will include NAB's Radio Show and its Sales and Management Television Exchange simultaneously.

"We're getting feedback that it is efficient for exhibitors and members, for programming all in one place," LeGeyt explained. He predicts this model "will be a successful one for this year when budgets are tight."

As LeGeyt navigates the leadership transition, he can look out to the U.S. Capitol from his office in the new NAB Building on South Capitol Street. Although the building is near Nationals Park, he and fellow staff members have to go up to the roof to catch a glimpse of the baseball field. And although he admits becoming a fan of D.C. teams during his decades in Washington, the heart and soul of this Connecticut native is still with New England sports teams.

"There's nothing quite like Boston sports," he said with a smile.

At the same time he is preparing NAB's agenda, LeGeyt and his family (including three kids under 8 years old), are getting ready to move from suburban Alexandria, Virginia, into Washington, D.C. He is involved with several music-related charities, including "Tracy's Kids" (a music and arts program for childhood cancer support), Musicians on Call (which delivers music programs to patients); he and his wife also support mental health charities.

LeGeyt's philanthropic efforts reflect his NAB agenda, which as he put it, involves "a passion for what we do." For his day job as broadcasting's chief cheerleader, LeGeyt said he "wants to beat the drum" and "assure that policies are in place" to assure broadcasters a steady future. ●

Curtis LeGeyt and Emily L. Barr (c.), CEO of Graham Media Group and chair of the NAB Television Board, talk with Sen. Maria Cantwell (r., D-Wash.) during a 2019 Senate Commerce Committee hearing.



Roku Refreshes Product Line For Spring

Bows voice remote, budget 4K player while adding WiFi optimization to OS



By Daniel Frankel
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Roku, announcing a flurry of product upgrades all at once, has unveiled a voice-enabled, rechargeable remote control, a budget 4K player and a premium iteration of its integrated sound bar.

The streaming company also unveiled an upgraded operating system that now includes WiFi optimization.

We'll start with the hardware:

Roku Streambar Pro

▼ Price: \$179.99

Roku confused a lot of us last year, debuting the \$129.99 Smart Streambar just months after bowing its first integrated sound device, the \$179.99 Smart Sound Bar. Was the former replacing the latter? What's the difference between the two? Roku was cagey at the time, but its new upgrade clarifies the product line. It's not only bigger, it features Virtual Surround, meaning users can get surround sound without paying for the extra speakers and subwoofer accessories. The device, which includes a premium integrated Roku player, also features the Roku Voice Remote (the older version that's not rechargeable).

Both the Roku Streambar Pro and the Express 4K+ will be available in mid-May. The Voice Remote Pro is available now directly from Roku.com.



Roku Voice Remote Pro

► Price: \$29.99

This standalone accessory works with all Roku TV models and audio devices, as well as select streaming players. The principal upgrade is the rechargeable battery, which gets its juice from a mini-USB connection and can hold a charge for up to two months.

The always-on midfield microphone not only lets users shout volume, playback and other commands while otherwise occupying their hands with all manner of sticky and greasy foods, rather than push a voice control button, it also lets them find their lost controller by merely stating, "Hey Roku, where's my remote?"

There's a push-to-talk feature for the privacy-minded, as well as a headphone jack.

The accessory is a particularly useful upgrade for owners of low-priced, Roku-enabled smart TVs, which don't always come with the best remotes.



Roku Express 4K+

▲ Price: \$39.99

The realm of inexpensive OTT players is pretty crowded with options, but not so much if you want 4K/HDR.

Roku's new low-priced options support HD, 4K, HDR, HDR 10 and HDR 10+. Equipped with a quad-core processor and dual-band WiFi capabilities, the Express 4K+ also includes a voice remote. There's also this nifty feature: a micro-USB Ethernet port that lets the WiFi challenged wire the goods straight into the device.

Roku is also selling the \$35.99 "Roku Express 4K" (sans the "plus"), which features a basic infrared remote, as a Walmart exclusive.

Roku TV

Home

Featured Free

My Feed

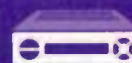
Movie Store

TV Store

Search

Streaming Channels

Settings



Cable Box

NETFLIX

SHOWTIME



Telecom, Video Pinched by Global Microchip Shortage

Set-top maker Amino reports six-month backlog for silicon orders

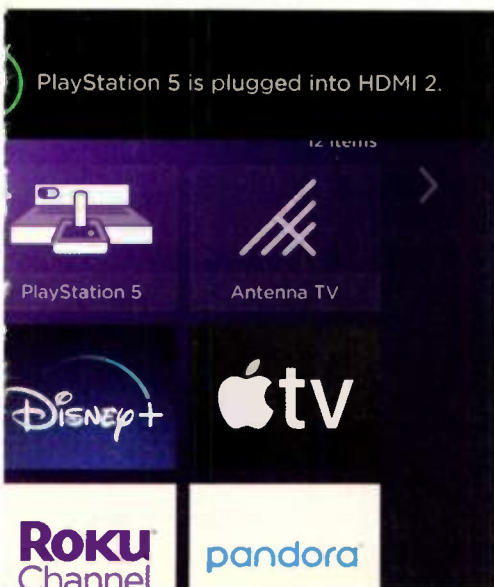
OS Upgrades ▼

Roku, meanwhile, has already begun rolling out Roku OS 10, which expands integration of Apple AirPlay 2 and HomeKit to lower-priced HD-only devices. The new OS also includes a nifty feature called Instant Resume, which helps users get back to the content they were watching within supported channels.

With Instant Resume, when a user reloads a channel after taking a break, reload times will be much quicker, and they'll be taken back to the place in the show where they left off much faster. Apps supporting the feature include AT&T TV, FilmRise, Fox Business Network, Fox News, Fubo Sports Network, HappyKids TV, Plex.tv, Starz and The Roku Channel.

Another new feature lets users modify their live channel guide, creating favorites lists and burying channels they never watch.

Perhaps the most nifty feature, however, is the new automatic WiFi network detection aspect, which automatically chooses the most efficient frequency band in the home. ●



By Daniel Frankel
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Demand for electronics, already accentuated by a pandemic that had all of us relying on internet protocol devices even more, is set to further explode. Recent survey results from equity research company Cowen found 43% of U.S. consumers plan to purchase a new smartphone this year, up from 30% in 2020.

As for connected TV devices, they're already coming off a record fourth quarter, with shipments increasing by 7.6% to 305.3 million.

Looming over this prosperity is a global shortage in the supply of semiconductors that has already brought the auto industry to its knees and has drawn a 100-day review by the Biden administration.

Hamstrung by a shortage of chips that control everything from in-car entertainment systems to power steering sensors, U.S. automakers General Motors and Ford said in February the semiconductor scarcity could cut into their full-2021 earnings by as much as \$2 billion and \$2.5 billion, respectively.

Global semiconductor sales totaled \$439 billion in 2020, up 5% over 2019, according to the Semiconductor Industry Association. Sales for December alone were up 8.3% to over \$39 billion.

Manufacturing hasn't been able to keep up with demand. Semiconductor companies Intel, Nvidia and Taiwan's TCSM say the problem could persist past 2022.

The streaming video industry hasn't reported feeling the impact yet — there wasn't a single

reference to the scarcity of semiconductors in the Q4 earnings reports of Apple, Alphabet, Amazon, Roku or Xperi.

But as these publicly traded companies get ready to queue up their Q1 earnings, the check's probably in the mail.

Donald McGarva, CEO of U.K.-based pay TV set-top tech company Amino

Technologies, said lead times for chipset orders have grown by as much as six months.

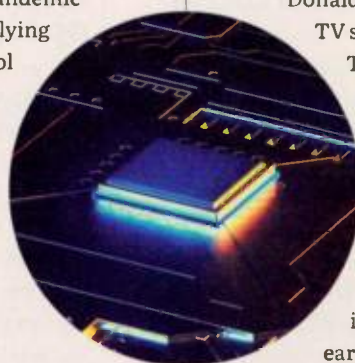
"Of course, fluctuations in the chipset market have happened before, and Amino always works hard to mitigate customer impact," McGarva said in a statement. "This time, we took

early management action to secure stock, increase inventory holdings, build buffer stock and forecast additional kitting and assemblies, all to ensure that our supply chain is operating with the best possible lead times."

The cable and telecom industry weighed in on the issue earlier, as the Biden administration had already convened its review of the cable and telecom industry.

ISPs Want to Be Heard

"We urge you to include broadband providers in measures to address the chip shortage, support initiatives that will expand domestic innovation and investment in semiconductor development and manufacturing facilities for all industries and ensure coordination across government and with industry partners on supply chain matters," read a joint letter sent from trade groups NCTA-The Internet & Television Association, ACA Connects, CTIA-The Wireless Association and USTelecom. ●



Amino Technologies
CEO Donald McGarva

People

Notable executives on the move



ABC NEWS

Kimberly Godwin was named president of ABC News, overseeing editorial and business operations for broadcast, digital, streaming and audio news across the organization. She had been executive VP of news at CBS News.



ALTMAN SOLON

Altman Solon, a consulting firm focused exclusively on the Telecommunications, Media, and Technology (TMT) sectors, has hired **Mary Ann Halford** as a partner. A former Fox and ITN Networks executive, she was senior adviser to OC&C Strategy Consultants.



AMERICAN DOCUMENTARY

American Documentary, executive producer of the series *POV* on PBS and *America ReFramed* on World Channel, has named **Erika Dilday** executive director. She comes from Futuro Media Group, where she was CEO since 2017.



CBS

Neeraj Khemlani was named co-head of CBS News and CBS Television Stations, part of a restructuring that combines the two ViacomCBS units. He was executive VP and deputy group head at Hearst Newspapers.



CBS

Wendy McMahon was also tapped as co-head of CBS News and CBS Television Stations. A former exec at WCCO Minneapolis and WBZ Boston, she rejoins CBS from The Walt Disney Co., where she was president of the ABC Owned Television Stations since 2017.



COMCAST

Comcast Advertising has named **Tony Sanchez** to the new post of VP, customer experience. Formerly VP of operations for the customer experience product team, Sanchez will spearhead the company's customer and employee focus.



COMMSCOPE

Cable technology vendor CommScope has appointed **Justin Choi** as chief legal officer, replacing the retiring Burk Wyatt. Choi had been executive VP, general counsel, secretary and chief compliance officer at Anixter International.



CROWN MEDIA

Jonathan Sichel has joined Crown Media Family Networks as New York-based executive VP, general counsel, leading all legal and business affairs matters. He was executive VP of distribution sales and strategy at AMC Networks.



DOUBLEVERIFY

Digital media measurement software platform DoubleVerify has added **Doug Campbell** as chief strategy officer, responsible for global strategy and corporate development. He had been chief strategy officer at Telaria.



EFFECTV

Effectv, the advertising sales division of Comcast Cable, has tapped **Dawn Lee Williamson** as head of its new sales development division that will accelerate the company's move to audience delivery across screens. She was Southeast region VP.

**FRONTIER**

Veronica Bloodworth has joined Frontier Communications as executive VP and chief network officer, overseeing all network operations. She comes from AT&T, where she was senior VP of construction and engineering.

**KYRA MEDIA**

Shan Lui was named senior VP of talent at Generation Z-focused media company Kyra Media. She comes from Superfly, where she was VP of creative partnerships and senior producer, producing immersive experiences around TV properties.

**NBCUNIVERSAL**

Kelly Abcarian has joined NBCUniversal's Advertising and Partnerships division as executive VP of measurement and impact. The ad-industry veteran had most recently been general manager of Nielsen's Advanced Video Advertising Group.

**NEWSNATION**

Nexstar Media Group-owned NewsNation has added **Allison Harris** as a correspondent in its Washington, D.C., bureau, focused on news coming from the White House. She comes from KDFW Dallas-Fort Worth, where she was a reporter.

**NEWSNATION**

Adrienne Bankert has joined NewsNation as an anchor/correspondent, tasked with covering national affairs and delivering special reports. She had been a New York-based national correspondent for ABC News.

**PALEY CENTER**

Paul A. Allen was named VP, development, at the Paley Center for Media, responsible for leading all organization fundraising initiatives. He comes from the 911 Memorial & Museum, where he was director, major gifts and grants.

**SAMBA TV**

Tim Natividad has joined Samba TV as senior VP of agency of brand solutions. He comes from Roku, where he was head of performance advertising, focusing on bringing digital advertising solution to the platform's customers.

**ZEFR**

Kelsey Garigan was elevated to executive VP, head of North American sales for Zefr, a data company gauging brand suitability in video. A former executive with DoubleVerify, she had been West Coast VP.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Other industry execs making moves

MediaMath has added three industry veterans to its senior management team: **Ashish Shukla**, formerly head of architecture at PayPal, was named chief technology officer; **Ingrid Hackett**, who had been general counsel and compliance officer at Quantum Spatial, was tapped as general counsel and **Laurent Cordier**, formerly chief revenue officer at Headspin, was appointed chief partnerships officer. ... **Charlyn Stanberry** has joined the National Association of Broadcasters as VP of government relations. She had been chief of staff to Rep. Yvette Clarke (D-N.Y.), NAB also elected **Byron Allen**, founder, chairman and CEO of Allen Media Group, to a two-year term on the NAB Television Board. Re-elected to the board were: **Robert Hubbard**, Hubbard Television Group/Hubbard Broadcasting; **David Bradley**, News-Press & Gazette Co.; **David Hanna**, Lockwood Broadcasting; and **Chris Ripley**, Sinclair Broadcast Group.

Ad Meter

Who's spending what where

PROMO MOJO

Our exclusive weekly ranking of the programming that networks are promoting most heavily (April 26-May 2)



Home Town Takeover, HGTV

TV Ad Impressions: **187,309,315**
Total TV ad impressions within all U.S. households, including national linear (live and time-shifted), VOD plus OTT and local

Est. Media Value: **\$1,038,406**
Estimated media value of in-network promos

On the strength of 187.3 million TV ad impressions, HGTV's promo for *Home Town Takeover* tops the chart. In second place: Paramount Network's spot for *Bar Rescue*, with 177.2 million impressions. Two traditional broadcasters — CBS, which hypes *Kids Say the Darndest Things*, and NBC, promoting the 2021 Kentucky Derby — take third and fourth place, respectively. And cable network FX gives some love to *Pose* to close out the list.


Visit nexttv.com/news for weekly Promo Mojo charts between print issues.

TOP 5 PROMOTIONS


- 1. Home Town Takeover, HGTV**
TV Ad Impressions **187,309,315**
Est. Media Value **\$1,038,406**
- 2. Bar Rescue, Paramount Network**
TV Ad Impressions **177,200,375**
Est. Media Value **\$576,406**
- 3. Kids Say the Darndest Things, CBS**
TV Ad Impressions **174,431,427**
Est. Media Value **\$963,098**
- 4. 2021 Kentucky Derby, NBC**
TV Ad Impressions **170,537,485**
Est. Media Value **\$1,258,691**
- 5. Pose, FX Network**
TV Ad Impressions **164,384,663**
Est. Media Value **\$1,175,987**

BIG SPENDERS

Brands ranked by the greatest increase in TV spend (April 26-May 2)

1  **IBM Cloud**


Spend Increase:	393%
Est. TV Spend:	\$6.2M
Spend Within Industry:	62%
Top Network:	ABC

2  **Rocket Mortgage**

Spend Increase:	157%
Est. TV Spend:	\$5.4M
Spend Within Industry:	40%
Top Network:	ESPN

3  **Uber Eats**

Spend Increase:	116%
Est. TV Spend:	\$2.6M
Spend Within Industry:	41%
Top Network:	NFL Network

4  **Tide**


Spend Increase:	102%
Est. TV Spend:	\$2.6M
Spend Within Industry:	30%
Top Network:	ABC

5  **Pizza Hut**


Spend Increase:	93%
Est. TV Spend:	\$2.8M
Spend Within Industry:	20%
Top Network:	ESPN

MOST-SEEN TV ADS


Brands ranked by TV ad impressions (April 26-May 2)

1  **Domino's**

TV Ad Impressions:	1.35B
Est. TV Spend:	\$6.7M
Interruption Rate:	1.51%
Top Show:	Law & Order: SVU

2  **GEICO**

TV Ad Impressions:	1.29B
Est. TV Spend:	\$15.7M
Interruption Rate:	2.29%
Top Show:	2021 NFL Draft

3  **Liberty Mutual**

TV Ad Impressions:	1.2B
Est. TV Spend:	\$6.1M
Interruption Rate:	1.99%
Top Show:	Law & Order: SVU

4  **Progressive**

TV Ad Impressions:	974.5M
Est. TV Spend:	\$12.7M
Interruption Rate:	1.99%
Top Show:	2021 NFL Draft

5  **T-Mobile**

TV Ad Impressions:	833.8M
Est. TV Spend:	\$11.2M
Interruption Rate:	1.80%
Top Show:	2021 NFL Draft

B+C'S MOST VIEWED

Top stories on broadcastingcable.com, April 14-May 10

1. 'Jeopardy!' Guest Hosts' Ratings: How They Rank After 15 Weeks
2. Nexstar To Launch Rewind TV, Digital Channel Airing Classics
3. YouTube TV Gets Dropped from Roku Channel Store
4. Area Man Appears on 'Jeopardy!', Wins
5. Baltimore Official Marilyn Mosby Files FCC Complaint Against WBFF-TV

To read these stories, visit broadcastingcable.com.

ROKU, FIRE TV LOSE MARKET SHARE AS STREAMING SURGES WORLDWIDE

NEXT TV

WITH STREAMING USAGE surging in regions like Europe and South America during the pandemic, market share has slipped for the top U.S. connected-TV device platforms, Roku and Amazon Fire TV.

According to Conviva's latest data, Roku has seen a 3% drop in global connected TV "big screen" usage in the first quarter of 2021 vs. Q1 2020, and now stands at 30% of the worldwide market. Amazon Fire TV has slipped from 22% to 19% over that same span.

Conversely, Korean smart TV makers Samsung and LG have seen strong sales in fast-emerging markets:

Samsung's market share is up 3 points to 12% in the latest Conviva study, while LG's penetration grew from 4% to 6%.

Also notable: Google's Android TV grew from 2% share to 5%.

While other research companies, including Strategy Analytics, measure market share by counting shipments, Conviva said its "proprietary sensor technology" is embedded into 3.3 billion streaming app downloads globally, "measuring in excess of 500 million unique viewers watching 180 billion streams per year with 1.8 trillion realtime transactions per day across more than 180 countries."

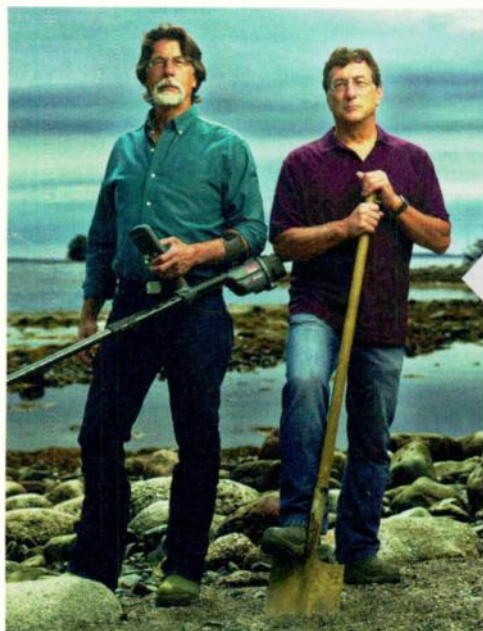
The shifting platform pie comes as streaming usage has surged in places like South America, where usage was up 240% this past year, as well as Africa (up 149%) and Europe (up 122%). In North America, where Roku and Fire TV are dominant, usage was up just 18%.

In Europe, Roku accounted for just an 8% share of big-screen viewing. Its position is even worse in Africa, Asia, Oceania and South Africa, in all of which it has 4% usage or less, Conviva added. — Daniel Frankel

For stories like this, go to nexttv.com.



STICKIEST SHOWS Top 10 cable programs ranked by viewer engagement*



Stickiness Rank	Ratings Rank	Telecast (Week Ending May 2)	Network	Stickiness Index*
1	13	Presidential Address	MSNBC	153
2	23	When Calls the Heart	Hallmark Channel	146
3	1	2021 NFL Draft	ESPN	142
4	30	The Curse of Oak Island	History Channel	142
5	41	90 Day Fiancé: Happily Ever After?	TLC	140
6	286	Daddy's Perfect Little Girl	LMN	139
7	864	La Rosa de Guadalupe	Galavisión	139
8	318	Fear the Walking Dead	AMC	132
9	119	Tyler Perry's The Oval	BET	132
10	28	2021 NFL Draft	NFL Network	131



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)

STICKEST SHOWS Top 10 broadcast programs ranked by viewer engagement*

Stickiness Rank	Ratings Rank	Telecast (Week Ending May 2)	Network	Stickiness Index*
1	150	<i>Enamorándonos</i>	UniMás	150
2	142	<i>¿Te Acuerdas De Mi?</i>	Univision	87
3	141	<i>La Hija Del Embajador</i>	Univision	96
3	141	<i>The Voice</i>	NBC	3
5	140	<i>Blue Bloods</i>	CBS	10
6	139	<i>Diseñando Tu Amor</i>	Univision	85
7	139	<i>Buscando A Frida</i>	Telemundo	121
8	138	<i>FBI</i>	CBS	5
9	134	<i>NCIS</i>	CBS	2
10	131	<i>FBI: Most Wanted</i>	Fox	11



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 APRIL 26

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>The Circle (US)</i>	Netflix	Share of binges: 3.92%
2	<i>Shadow and Bone</i>	Netflix	Share of binges: 3.30%
3	<i>Modern Family</i>	Peacock/Hulu	Share of binges: 1.23%
4	<i>Grey's Anatomy</i>	Netflix/Hulu	Share of binges: 1.21%
5	<i>Law & Order: Special Victims Unit</i>	Peacock/Hulu	Share of binges: 1.02%
6	<i>Younger</i>	Hulu	Share of binges: 0.94%
7	<i>Schitt's Creek</i>	Netflix/Prime Video	Share of binges: 0.92%
8	<i>The Falcon and the Winter Soldier</i>	Disney Plus	Share of binges: 0.79%
9	<i>Invincible</i>	Amazon Prime	Share of binges: 0.68%
10	<i>Criminal Minds</i>	Netflix/Hulu	Share of binges: 0.66%

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 www.whipmedia.com/subscribe/



MCN'S MOST VIEWED

Top five stories on multichannel.com, April 14-May 10

1. There's More to Roku vs. Google Than the Usual Dollars and Sense
2. Sinclair RSNs Face 'Tumultuous' Period, Analyst Says
3. Satellite TV: Five Years, That's All You've Got
4. Juan Williams Brings An Alternative Voice to Fox News
5. Weekly Cable Ratings: Fox News Continues Ratings Momentum

To read these stories, go to multichannel.com.



Most-Watched Shows on TV in April



Of all the live, linear minutes watched by VIZIO smart TVs in April, 0.99% of the time was spent watching *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. See what 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 April, X% of the time was spent on show Y"



People Active Online* at Home During the Work Day

1/29/2020-4/30/2021 | 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



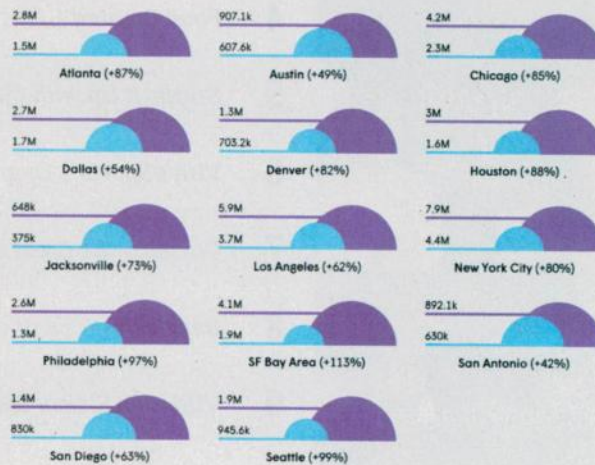
22.6 Million

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

40.3 Million

are active online* during the work day now

CITY BY CITY BREAKDOWN



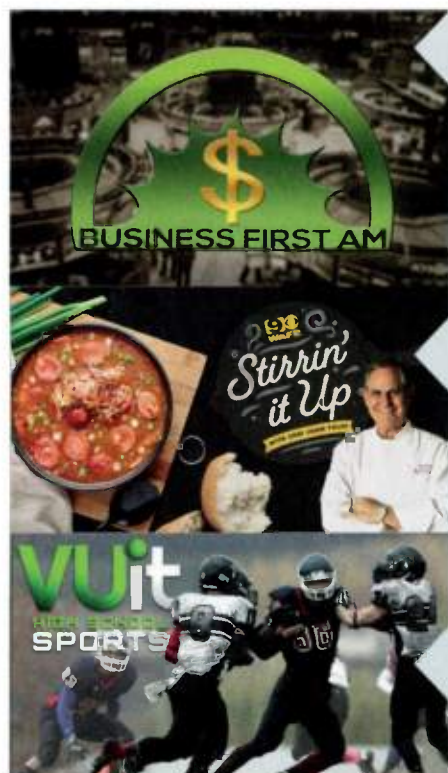
*Estimates based on metro area populations and anonymized data taken from a sample of U.S. households powered by the Plume Cloud. Active online defined as 6+ hours between 9a-6p.

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

Rank	Station	Location	Owner	What event drove tune-in?
1	KTSF*	San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose	Lincoln Broadcasting	<p>LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS BOYS HIGH SCHOOL LACROSSE TRAVERSE CITY ST. FRANCIS VS CADILLAC</p>
2	WFMZ	Philadelphia	Maranatha Broadcasting	
3	WWTV	Traverse City, Michigan	Heritage Broadcasting	
4	WKYT	Lexington, Kentucky	Gray Television	
5	KTUU	Anchorage, Alaska	Gray Television	
6	KGMB	Honolulu, Hawaii	Gray Television	
7	WAFB	Baton Rouge, Louisiana	Gray Television	
8	WRDW	Augusta-Aiken, Georgia	Gray Television	
9	KIEM	Eureka, California	Terrier Media	
10	WSAZ	Charleston-Huntington, West Virginia	Gray Television	

* Most out-of-market viewers

STREAMED CONTENT The VUit app's 10 most-viewed pieces of content



- Business First AM** | Daily news series
- ACCDN Confidential** | Collegiate sports
- Martin Yan's Gourmet Kitchen** | Culinary program
- Food Curated** | Documentary series
- Stirrin' It Up with Chef John Folse** | Culinary program
- VUit eSports** | Original on-demand eSports
- Crossing the Great Lakes** | Documentary series
- Backlash** | VUit original short film
- VUit High School Sports Replays** | On-demand local sports
- Detroit Muscle** | Automotive enthusiast program

VUIT'S MOST POPULAR CHANNELS

Most streamed channels on the VUit app for April 2021

1. NYC Live Street Cam
2. VUit Sports Replays
3. ExhaleTV
4. ACCDN Confidential
5. PowerNation

To view these channels, go to VUit.com



By Alison Levin, Roku
@Roku

Say Goodbye to the Traditional TV Upfronts

Media buying plans should start mirroring video viewing habits

was speaking recently to an agency president. He shared his strategy for this year's upfronts: "Buy TV like you watch TV." It's a mandate that captures the accelerated shift from traditional TV to streaming TV in the last year. More than one in three Americans no longer has pay TV. The average age for the big three broadcast networks is now more than 60.

However, how are marketers making "buy TV like you watch TV" reality? Here are three lessons from brands who are going streaming-first:

TV streaming has broadcast-level reach: The year 2020 was pay TV's worst in history, with the major providers losing a collective 7 million subscribers. Marketers want the ability to build scale, connect with new audiences, view campaigns holistically and optimize in real time. According to the Harris Poll, for the first time ever, more Americans now report spending more time streaming than watching traditional pay TV. Importantly, the growth in streaming is not additive to overall viewing time. Average reported streaming hours increased 19% year over year while average traditional TV viewing hours decreased 13%, according to the survey results. The broad behavior shifts toward streaming and away from



linear is here to stay, and smart marketers are gaining access to profound reach and scale.

Big TV moment storytelling must go beyond the 30-second ad:

Tentpole sports events like the Super Bowl and March Madness illustrate how TV viewership has changed. Consider that this year's Super Bowl received the lowest ratings since 2007, but CBS reported a new streaming record of 5.7 million viewers per minute, on average, up from 3.4 million last year. This trend extends beyond sports moments. According to Roku internal data, during Oprah

Alison Levin is VP of global ad revenue and marketing solutions at Roku.

Winfrey's historic interview with Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, reach for channels carrying the interview increased 7.3% week-over-week. Also, while the audience for this year's Golden Globe Awards got older, the streaming audience was younger than traditional linear TV.

Just as brands embraced streaming as their preferred way to watch on-demand movies and TV shows, users are shifting towards streaming as their preferred way to watch live sports events. Streaming not only delivers audiences to brands at scale, it provides them with powerful ways to bring storytelling to life beyond the 30-second ad. Brands can take advantage of multiple interactive and immersive ad formats only found on TV streaming to deliver their message in fun and engaging ways.

The TV screen is now full funnel. The big screen is no longer just focused on the upper funnel:

No matter the type of marketer, from a large consumer packaged goods (CPG) brand to a direct-to-consumer (DTC) brand, TV streaming allows an advertiser to quantify what happens after a customer sees the ad. There is no guesswork. Consumers are willing to watch ads if they're relevant and captivating. This is where working platforms with a direct relationship with the consumer will be crucial. Without this, marketers are left speculating on performance.

Streaming provides not just a holistic view into performance, but advertisers can easily optimize a campaign in real time. We've passed the tipping point. As we head into a busy upfronts season and prepare for another record year in streaming, leading marketers are already shifting their TV upfront commitments. Those left out will need to pick up the pace. As viewership continues to shift, marketers that focus on where consumers are heading will be well-positioned no matter what the future holds. ●

Michael Bair

Executive VP, Spectrum Networks

Media veteran hones the local edge for Charter's news, sports outlets

Michael Bair knows his way around a sports network. The longtime media executive worked at ad firm Ogilvy & Mather, Showtime, HBO, Cablevision Systems and Rainbow Media before a nine-year stint as president of Madison Square Garden Media Group and two years as CEO of streaming startup Bleachers Corp. He joined Charter Communications in 2016, after the merger with Time Warner Cable, to run Spectrum Networks. Now in charge of 30 sports and news channels, including the iconic NY1, Spectrum SportsNet and SportsNet LA in Los Angeles and local sports channels in Kansas City and Hawaii (as well as a 27% stake in SNY, the TV home of the New York Mets), Bair is guiding the channels through one of the industry's most disruptive periods ever. He discussed the changing landscape with *Multichannel News*/B+C senior content producer, finance, Mike Farrell. An edited transcript follows.

With vaccines more widespread and MLB planning a 162-game schedule this season, are you optimistic sports may finally be on its way back? Sports took a pause but never fully went away. While I am optimistic that as the vaccine continues to roll out across the country, more and more stadiums and arenas will be able to safely welcome fans back, I am equally confident that fans will continue to tune in to SportsNet and SportsNet LA. Last season, Dodgers telecasts on SportsNet LA recorded the network's highest-ever household rating (2.63) and A25-54 rating (1.43), while Lakers live game broadcasts on SportsNet recorded the highest household rating (2.99) and A25-54 rating (2.03) since the 2012-13 season.

You have four regional sports networks. Do you see that programming differently than some of your peers, as more of a retention tool? With all of our networks, sports and news, we focus on engagement. On the news side, who we are and what we do is entirely community-based. Our goal is to add value to the customers' services and to be essential to their everyday lives. For sports, our goal is also to provide value—in this instance, by eliminating the middleman, which often increases the cost of sports programming.

SportsNet LA, home of the current World Series champion Dodgers, signed a carriage deal with DirecTV owner AT&T last year. Are you close to other deals? We announced our carriage agreement with AT&T last April, and now SportsNet LA is available to 100% of homes in Las Vegas and Hawaii. We do not have anything to report on negotiations with other distributors, but it should be noted that Spectrum and AT&T are available to the vast majority of potential viewers in the Dodgers in-market area.

You have news channels in markets as diverse as New York, Los Angeles and Bowling Green, Kentucky. How important is local news to the overall strategy? Local journalism is as essential to communities as are schools, parks and libraries. Over the past year, the pandemic has accentuated the critical need for reliable local news that informs and empowers communities. Yet, local news organizations are shutting down, cutting costs and reducing coverage. We're largely going in the other direction, even launching new networks in Dallas, Texas, and Asheville, North Carolina, in the middle of the pandemic.

BONUS FIVE

All-time favorite TV show? Big Ten on game day).
The West Wing

TV shows on your watch list? *Temple, Curfew, Tehran, Ted Lasso*

Destinations on your vacation bucket list? Norway, South Africa, Greek Islands (or every football stadium in the

Favorite podcast? *Tying it Together* with Tim Boyum and *Masters of Scale* with Reid Hoffman

Books on your nightstand? *Humanocracy* by Gary Hamel, *The Kingdom* by Jo Nesbo, *American Dirt* by Jeanine Cummins

At right, Charles Divins (l.) and Alex Stockwell co-anchor *Your Morning on Spectrum News 1 in Austin, Texas*, one of the channels overseen by Spectrum Networks executive VP Michael Bair (below).



What are your plans for those news channels? Over the past few years, we have launched networks in California, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Ohio and Wisconsin. In 2020, we expanded our networks in North Carolina and Texas, and we launched the Spectrum News App to better enable Spectrum customers to access our news and content to our video and our internet-only customers. Our plan is to constantly increase and improve on our local coverage. Going forward, as news consumption habits continue to evolve, our goal is to ensure that our customers can always access our news anytime and anywhere, whether they are watching, listening or reading. ●



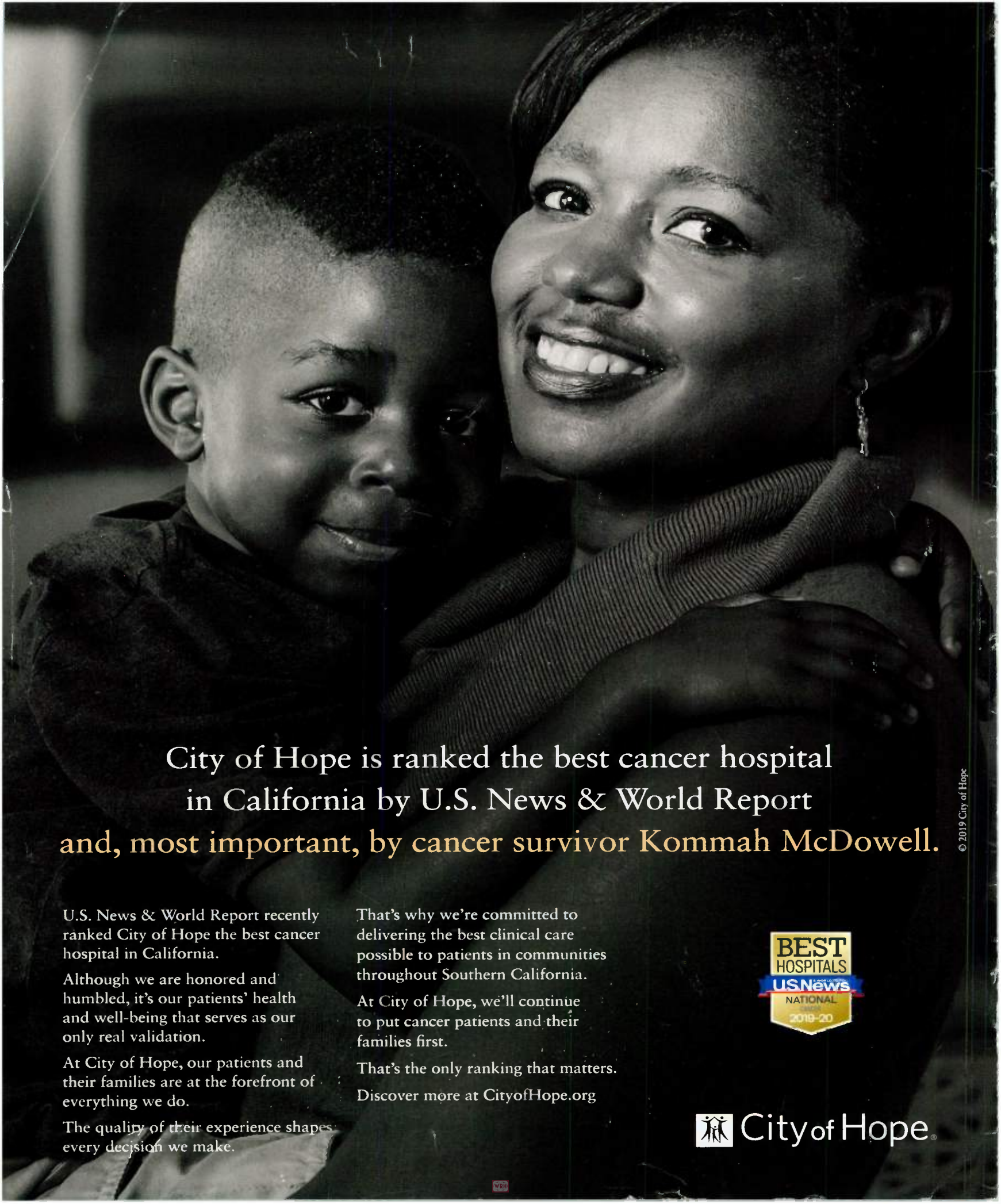
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