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ON SATURDAY NIGHTS



W O N D E R W O M E N

OF LOS ANGELES

Meet 15 influential executives — and one veteran anchor — who make the TV industry shine in Hollywood



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DEAL WON'T SPARK
A SUMMER OF LOVE


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GAME: STEERING A
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WONDER WOMEN OF LOS ANGELES

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4 AGENDA

The Discovery-WarnerMedia and Amazon-MGM deals have put pressure on content companies to heavy up. But most of the big players seem happy not to rush to the consolidation altar.

By Mike Farrell

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WONDER WOMEN OF LOS ANGELES
Say hello to Hollywood and 15 of the women executives making waves in the West Coast video industry, plus 2021 Woman of Influence Deborah Norville.

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FUTURE

Connectors
Creators
Experience
Makers

Consolidation Can Wait

Content giants say there's no need for big deals, for now



By Mike Farrell
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The pressure is mounting for programmers, in the wake of the pending \$43 billion merger between AT&T's WarnerMedia and Discovery and Amazon's \$8.45 billion purchase of movie studio MGM, to look for similar hookups. But even as some stocks have risen along with hopes for a stream of big deals, most are telling investors they will resist the temptation.

Warner Bros. Discovery, as the new venture will be named, will be a streaming and linear content powerhouse with more than 30 iconic brands, including CNN, HBO, HGTV and Food Network. While the pairing will likely help drive up affiliate fees for those networks — at least for the short term — the long-term benefit from the deal is expected to be in streaming video. HBO Max, launched about a year ago and with around 44 million subscribers, should get an added boost from Discovery's own streaming offering, Discovery Plus, which has about 11 million subscribers to its mostly reality-based programming.

Amazon said on May 26 that it would buy MGM in a deal worth \$8.45 billion, bringing iconic film content like the James Bond franchise, as well as streaming and linear TV series like *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Fargo* into the online retailer's fold. Most analysts see the deal as a way for Amazon to quickly bolster its content library, and subsequently its Amazon Prime Video subscriber rolls.



Heavying Up for the Arms Race

Several analysts have speculated that those deals will beget others. In a research note earlier this month, Wells Fargo media analyst Steven Cahall wrote that he expects ViacomCBS to at least explore monetizing its Paramount and CBS TV studios, as scaled production operations are considered "rare gems" in today's climate.

"DTC is a content arms race, and scale is most necessary," Cahall wrote.

Investors apparently believe the same. Stocks for small and large programmers all have risen in the three weeks after the Warner-Discovery unveiling on May 17. The biggest gains were at Lionsgate Entertainment, the movie studio that also serves as home to premium channel Starz, up about 20%, followed by AMC Networks, up about 16% and ViacomCBS up 10%. The Walt Disney Co., which owns industry-leading streaming service Disney Plus, saw its stock rise about 4% in the weeks after the Warner-Discovery deal.

Lionsgate Entertainment CEO Jon Feltheimer said during its May 27 conference call with analysts to discuss

fiscal Q4 results that the WarnerMedia and Amazon deals are a "resounding affirmation" of the continued value of content, IP and brands, but said he didn't want his company to get distracted by the "concept of scale."

Feltheimer was a bit miffed that its Starz premium offering, with about 30 million subscribers, was being called a "niche service" in articles speculating about future M&A.

"We don't think 30 million subscribers is a niche service," he said, adding that the goal is to make Starz a market leader in premium content.

"And that's how we'll build our value," Feltheimer continued. "So obviously, we talked to everyone, we listened to everything, but our main job right now is to create outsized value. And the way we're going to do that is by keeping our head down, having all of our businesses talk to each other 10 times a day, which is what they do."

Comcast's Options

Comcast, which owns NBCUniversal as well as the largest traditional cable distribution arm in the country, has been under pressure to spin off its content arm to unlock value. While that could still happen, Cahall wrote that Comcast has three choices: selling/merging its studios, getting more aggressive with its Peacock streaming service or doing nothing. In his research note, he said option three would be most likely.

At its annual meeting of shareholders on June 2, Comcast chairman and CEO Brian Roberts said there was no need for a buying spree, adding that the company is "pleased with our talent, our assets, our culture, our resources."

But Comcast has been no stranger to M&A in the past, and the company was said to be looking at WarnerMedia earlier this year but backed off because of regulatory concerns. While its size may ultimately dictate its options, Roberts said Comcast and AT&T are distinctly different companies with disparate needs.

"What AT&T does sort of speaks for itself," Roberts said. ●

Fargo (above), on FX, and *The Handmaid's Tale* (below), on Hulu, are among the top shows produced by MGM, soon to be owned by Amazon.



PRIDE TV Summit

JUNE 23, 2021

LGBTQ+ Inclusion in TV

Pride TV Summit provides a unique opportunity to explore recent advances in the evolution of television's LGBTQ+ characters and storylines, the growing acceptance of LGBTQ+ characters and storylines by multiple, diverse audience segments, and the impact that LGBTQ+ staffing is having within the ranks of today's business of television media.

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Pride TV Summit Hones in on the Business of Inclusion

First-ever event tackles issues important to TV's LGBTQ+ community



By R. Thomas Umstead
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With Pride Month celebrations in full swing, Broadcasting+Cable and Multichannel News are gearing up for the first-ever Pride TV Summit virtual conference June 23, focused on the business of television featuring LGBTQ+ characters and storylines.

Unlike other Pride events that focus on entertainment value and performances, the Pride TV Summit is a business conference that puts the spotlight on relevant LGBTQ+ issues and challenges within the TV and streaming industry. It also honors individuals and companies who are committed to creating strong and more meaningful representation across distribution platforms.

"We have gathered leading creatives, brands, and executives to participate in our program at the Pride TV Summit," said event producer Joe Schramm. "This event proves that targeting TV and video programming to LGBTQ+ audiences, and about the LGBTQ+ community is simple, good business. Whether you identify as LGBTQ+ or not, this event is worth your time."

A Sense of Where Things Are

With the number of LGBTQ+ characters on scripted broadcast, cable and streaming

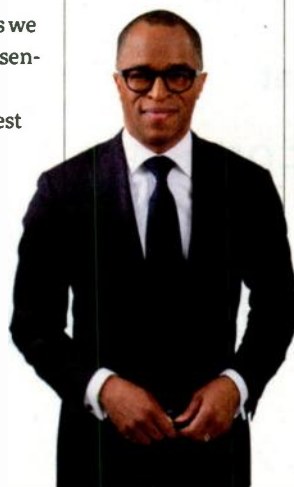


shows declining during the pandemic-challenged 2020-21 television season according to GLAAD's annual Where We Are on TV report released earlier this year, the conference will examine the importance and impact of representation, how LGBTQ+ characters and storylines have evolved and the overall acceptance of LGBTQ+ characters and storylines.

"We continue to see that the industry and audiences are extremely engaged and interested in the growing landscape of LGBTQ+ content across media today," GLAAD CEO Sarah Kate Ellis said. "As we aim to grow authentic LGBTQ+ representation and inclusion, the Pride TV Summit and events like it help give best practices and guidance to ensure impactful content that will also be well-received."

Among the highlights of the event is a panel discussion featuring programming executives discussing the sensitive and controversial

Nicole Maines (above), a transgender superhero in The CW's *Supergirl*, will be a key Pride TV Summit panelist, and MSNBC's Jonathan Capehart (below) is among the summit's award winners.



nuances of casting LGBTQ roles in today's market. The panel will feature actor Nicole Maines, who plays the first first transgender superhero on television in CW's *Supergirl*, as well *Star Trek: Discovery* casting director Margery Simkin, NBC Telemundo Enterprises executive producer Karen Barroetta and *Batwoman* writer/producer/showrunner Caroline Dries.

The Summit will also feature key interviews with content creators such as three-time Emmy nominee Randy Rainbow as well as a session featuring TV critics who review top programs to watch for the Pride season.

Opening the conference will be a focus on the state of the current marketplace and the impact of LGBTQ+ programming from Hollywood to the TV screen. Luis Sandoval from Univision's *Despierta America* will host the opening festivities.

The event will also feature a series of presentations, case studies and candid conversations from advertisers and sponsors targeting LGBTQ+ audiences, including representatives from such companies as P&G and Getty Images.

Honoring the Leaders

A main highlight of the Pride TV Summit is The Pride TV Leadership and Courage Awards Ceremony, which will showcase industry leaders advocating for the LGBTQ+ community on television. The Membership or Employee Association award will be presented to Comcast, while The CW will receive the Television Network award. The Media Agency award will go to the RAPP marketing agency. GLAAD's Ellis will receive the Advocacy award, while on-screen talent awards will go to ABC News transportation correspondent Gio Benitez and MSNBC's *The Sunday Show with Jonathan Capehart* host Jonathan Capehart.

Producer Ilene Chaiken will receive the Pride TV Awards' Leadership and Courage award for her groundbreaking work as executive producer of suchs shows as Showtime's *The L Word*, Fox's *Empire* and more recently, NBC's *Law & Order: Organized Crime*. ●

GLAAD's Sarah Kate Ellis Primes TV's 'Empathy Machine'

Positive media portrayals can pave a path to more acceptance for LGBTQ+ community



By R. Thomas Umstead
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Media veteran Sarah Kate Ellis has been leading the advocacy organization GLAAD for more than seven years, focusing its efforts on building and fostering greater media acceptance of the growing LGBTQ+ community. Ellis, who will be honored at the June 23 B+C and Multichannel News Pride TV Summit, talked about the relevance and importance of this year's Pride Month celebration, as well as the state of LGBTQ+ representation on television in an interview, an edited version of which appears below.

B+C: Does this year's Pride Month celebration take on greater significance given the cultural climate change the country has experienced over the past year?

Sarah Kate Ellis: Absolutely. Two things are at play here. One is that for the LGBTQ community as a whole, community is a really important part of our identities, especially because for so long, we lived in the shadows. Our coming together in person was sorely missed last year, especially because so many of our youth live in unaccepting households. From a policy and political perspective, there have been over 250 anti-LGBTQ bills introduced

this year in state legislatures across the United States — most of those are targeting trans and non-binary people. This year, we've seen 27 murders of transgender, non-binary people who are mostly Black and Latina, and we're pacing to be the deadliest year yet for the community. With the Equality Act, which is the largest piece of legislation for our community ever, passed in the House but stalled in the Senate, I think it's really important for us to use this month to build awareness and education about the Act and what it does to help protect our community.

B+C: What role can the entertainment industry play in educating the public about the issues you've mentioned?

SKE: TV and streaming content are empathy and education machines for our community. For instance, only 16% of Americans report knowing somebody who is transgender, so the rest of the country is learning about transgender people through media. Our annual report, *Where We Are on TV*, came out in January 2021, and we found that there was greater diversity of LGBTQ characters, but less characters overall. I'm really hopeful that [the

Sarah Kate Ellis, the president and CEO of GLAAD, points out that Pride Month awareness is especially important this year as the Equality Act makes its way through Congress.

decline] is likely due to COVID because a lot of productions were stopped, but a great example of how important content is for the community is FX's *Pose*. This was a revolutionary show that focused on trans people of color for the most part and told their stories, but it also focused on HIV and AIDS in the '80s. When this show shuts down this month, we will lose a significant number of trans characters on television, and we will then have zero characters living with HIV on scripted TV.

That's a lot of weight for one show to carry in terms of creating culture, education and empathy for our community. We need to see that spread out among other shows.

B+C: How does the industry go about developing more shows like *Pose* that depict authentic LGBTQ+ characters and storylines on screen?

SKE: Hollywood likes success — look at all the awards that *Pose* has received. Hulu's *Happiest Season* is an LGBTQ holiday movie that broke all of their records for new subscribers during its first weekend viewing. So if you put the content out there, the audience will come and they will flock to it as long as it's fair and accurate. I think that's a big motivator to create programming that's going to attract audiences and bring in new fan bases. I think the industry is moving in the right direction because it is showing more diverse characters.

For so long, shows and films were scared to include LGBTQ characters mainly out of fear of backlash, and we're way past that. If you look at

the latest Gallup poll, 16% of 18 to 24 year olds in America identify as LGBTQ. So they want to see themselves and their lives reflected back to them. As

content creators look to attract younger audiences, they're going to have to include LGBTQ people. ●



THE WATCHMAN

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



By Michael Malone
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New F**king AMC Show A Nod to Cheesy Sitcoms

*Kevin Can F**k Himself* starts on AMC June 20, following its launch on AMC Plus. Annie Murphy, still drawn to projects with curses in the title after *Schitt's Creek*, plays Allison. Think of her as the typical Sitcom Wife: pretty and patient, and married to a goofy guy.

Creator Valerie Armstrong got the idea from the family sitcoms she watched growing up. "The husband is funny and lovable and tubby, but he has this super-hot wife," Armstrong said. "She laughs at his jokes and makes his meals and is one of the gang. I thought, God, I wonder if she's miserable."

Allison busts out of her humdrum sitcom-y life and mayhem ensues. Armstrong said the producers looked at "a ton of people" for Allison, and then Murphy came along. "She fell in love with it the same way we all did," said Armstrong. "She understood it on a cellular level."

The title has been part of the project since it began four years ago. "At the time, I needed everything I was working on to have a title that would make me laugh," Armstrong said. "Otherwise, I would get annoyed with myself, seeing it on my desktop."

*Kevin Can F**k Himself*, she added, "always made me laugh."



Monsters At Work

Disney Plus's 'Monsters At Work' Taps a New Power Source

Monsters At Work premieres on Disney Plus July 2. A spinoff of *Monsters, Inc.*, *Monsters At Work* shows the monster plant no longer committed to scaring the heck out of kids, but to making them laugh, as laughs generate more power than scares.

Billy Crystal reprises Mike Wazowski and John Goodman is back as Sulley. Ben Feldman voices Tylor Tuskmon, who turns up at *Monsters, Inc.* psyched to make kids scream, only to learn his job has changed. Feldman was in *Superstore* and, going back a bit, *Mad Men*. He brings nuance to his big, scary monster character, said executive producer Bobs Gannaway.

"Ben's appealing and somewhat vulnerable voice comes out of this great monster," he added.

The producers and writers visited a couple power plants "so we could walk the plants, meet the people who generate the power, and understand how power works," said Gannaway.

The series, he added, takes the viewer beneath *Monsters, Inc.* "It's like going underneath Disneyland," Gannaway said.

"You see the workings beneath the out-facing areas."

There is plenty to explore in the 10 episodes. "We want you to fall in love with the new monsters and spend time with old friends," Gannaway said. ●

WATCH THIS ...

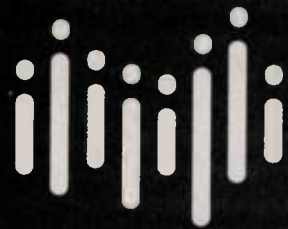


Card Sharks starts June 16 on ABC. Joel McHale hosts the game show, where major cash can be won on the turn of just one card. **Friday Night Vibes**, a weekly package of movies with diverse and inclusive themes, premieres on TBS June 18. Tiffany Haddish hosts and the series starts with boxing flicks *Creed* and *Creed 2*. **On June 21**, it's a special episode of *I'll Be Gone in the Dark* on HBO. Elizabeth Wolff directs this extension of



Michelle McNamara's investigation into the Golden State Killer. Also on June 21, twins Drew and Jonathan Scott take on a new run of *Celebrity IOU* on HGTV. The celebs doing right by their special pals include Kevin Hart, Gwyneth Paltrow and Howie Mandel. **Season five of *The Good Fight*** arrives June 24 on Paramount Plus. Robert and Michelle King run the show, and Christine Baranski stars.





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WONDER WOMEN

OF LOS ANGELES

SHINING BRIGHT IN THE HOLLYWOOD SPOTLIGHT

Fifteen influential execs, *Inside Edition*'s Deborah Norville to be honored

The editors of Multichannel News and B+C are proud to introduce the 15 Wonder Women of Los Angeles for 2021, the third L.A.-based extension of the Wonder Women program.

The honorees comprise a diverse group of successful executives from a range of fields at companies involved in TV programming, streaming technology, advertising and consulting.

"These 15 leaders in both traditional and

emerging categories of the TV industry are true Wonder Women, whose stories we're proud to share with our readers and guests at the event on June 7," Bill Gannon, VP and global editor-in-chief of Multichannel News, Broadcasting+Cable and Next TV, said. "Their wit and wisdom will be a great beginning to our Summer TV Events season."


In addition, Deborah Norville, anchor of the syndicated newsmagazine *Inside Edition*, will be recognized as a Woman of Influence.

The Wonder Women of Los Angeles were

honored at a June 7 virtual event, kicking off a month of Summer TV events presented by MCN/B+C parent Future, including the TV Data+Measurement Summit (June 9), the TV+Sports Summit (June 10) and the Pride TV Summit (June 23).

Look for information soon on the 23rd class of New York Wonder Women, to be celebrated in September, as well as a new event centered around San Francisco.

For more information on the Wonder Women program, visit mcnwonderwomen.com ●



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FUTURE

Connectors. Creators. Experience Makers.

Lauren Anderson

Co-Head of Content and Programming IMDb TV



By Stuart Miller
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When Lauren Anderson was very young, she was fascinated by TV. “I thought that people lived literally inside of the television and my mother was always nervous that I was going to break the TV trying to step inside,” recalled Anderson, now co-head of content and programming for Amazon’s free, ad-supported service IMDb TV, where she oversees all development, production, licensing, research and strategy. “And now I do work inside of the television.”

Within that universe, Anderson is a smash hit because “she has an ability to think big and she loves what we do,” Christel Miller, senior creative executive at Amazon Studios, said. “She’s also an insanely hard worker.”

The TV landscape where Anderson now works is very different from the one she watched as a child in Ohio, when the idea of running programming for an ad-supported video-on-demand (AVOD) network could not even be fathomed.

She started her programming career at a traditional broadcaster, NBC, after working in the player development group of the National Basketball Association’s Community and Player Programs Department, a job that followed a summer internship while she was at Columbia University.

“While I was at the NBA, I started getting really interested in what we were broadcasting out to the fans,” she said. She landed in the NBC Associates Program after explaining in interviews that sports and TV both involved entertainment and working with the most talented creators.

At NBC Entertainment, she rose to senior VP of primetime programming, working at the studio and network on shows like *The Good*

“I was always talking about how engaged younger fans were, digital viewership and watching online. I said, ‘I want to go where the customers are.’”

Place, *Parks and Recreation*, *The Office* and *The Carmichael Show*.

“Even while I was at NBC, I was always looking to try something different, something special,” she said, referring to those shows. “One thing I noticed about myself is that I’m always interested in the next thing and where we’re headed. I was always talking about how engaged younger fans were, digital viewership and watching online. I said, ‘I want to go where the customers are.’”

That led her to Indigo Development and Entertainment Arts, the studio joint venture between NBCUniversal and Snapchat. Under her leadership as chief content officer, Indigo began creating scripted content like *The Dead Girls Detective Agency* and *Kappa Crypto*, the first scripted series from the company to attract a major ad sponsorship.

Where the customers were really going were to streaming giants like Amazon, which Anderson joined in 2019 as head of strategic content for Amazon Studios, shepherding series such as the *Savage x Fenty Show* for Prime Video.

In 2020, she moved within Amazon to the programming role at IMDb TV.

Eye Toward What’s Next

“I’m always looking for what’s the new business and the IMDb TV business model, positioned inside of

Amazon, is exciting to me,” she said. “We are not behind a paywall and are available to everyone, so I still feel like I’m going to where the people are. We can be their first point of entry to lead to deeper engagement within the company. There’s a false belief that commercials are the enemy, but people really want to watch good caliber shows when it is convenient.”

The service is striving to provide premium original content for free. Under Anderson, IMDb tv has introduced original programming like the scripted series *Alex Rider* and the powerful docuseries *Moment of Truth*, which investigates whether racism and corruption in North Carolina led to the conviction of the wrong man in the high-profile murder of Michael Jordan’s father in the 1990s. Deals are in place for two Norman Lear projects, a new court show involving Judge Judy Sheindlin and for a spinoff of Amazon Prime Video’s hit series *Bosch*.

“We’re really just one year in with our originals and I’m really excited about our progress so far,” Anderson said. “Our early adopters are watching now, but I’d love it if a year from now these shows have a resurgence as the service and awareness grows.” ●



AMAZON STUDIOS
PROUDLY CONGRATULATES

Lauren Anderson

CO-HEAD OF CONTENT & PROGRAMMING, IMDb TV

AND ALL OF THE
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IMDb TV

AMAZON
STUDIOS

Andrea Clarke-Hall

Head of Global Business Development Tubi



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As the grandchild of immigrants from Italy, Andrea Clarke-Hall said she had an “idyllic family life with a crazy extended Italian family.” She described it as true joy.

Her grandparents settled in New York and her parents worked in the restaurant industry, saving up to eventually own their own eatery. She learned about business and a strong work ethic. Growing up in this entrepreneurial household, she wanted to be a restaurant owner, or maybe a movie star, but her family had other ideas. “I became a lawyer because I listened,” she said with a laugh.

She graduated college and attended law school on a full academic scholarship. At 23, she worked in the Brooklyn District Attorney’s Office while in law school and then became a criminal prosecutor. In the back of her mind, though, she felt something was lacking.

Clarke-Hall left government law and tried divorce law. This did not work either. Finally, she recognized it was time for a big change as her heart was telling her to work in the media.

Moving to Los Angeles, she secured another full academic scholarship, to the Anderson School of Management at UCLA, where she reinvented herself and found her calling.

While in school, Clarke-Hall began working with Fox Broadcasting in the intellectual property department, a natural fit considering her legal background. This led her to Sony’s Crackle, where she spent a year doing digital distribution in the very early days of streaming services, securing users, sealing



deals and determining what did and did not work.

After a year, she left Crackle for something completely new. “There was this thing called Tubi, and after meeting an amazing team of talented people, I thought to myself, ‘They’re building something amazing,’” she said.

At the time, Tubi was a little-known streaming service with about 30 people, headquartered in San Francisco with a satellite office in New York, where she worked in a small cubicle office up until

“This was the year that really accelerated things. The eyeballs moved en masse to ad-supported streaming, and as the eyeballs moved, so did the ad dollars.”

the pandemic in March of 2020.

Then Tubi took a major step forward, getting acquired by Fox at the start of the pandemic. “It was the year that you saw our first big brand campaigns, and if you watch the Fox broadcast network or the sports networks, you would see Tubi everywhere,” she said. “We were part of the World Series and there were Tubi ads in NFL games, which took us to a whole new level.”

Working through a merger amid a pandemic has meant spending a lot of time on Zoom meetings, meeting new people, experiencing massive growth both at Tubi and in the ad-supported streaming realm.

“This was the year that really accelerated things,” she said. “The eyeballs moved en masse to ad-supported streaming, and as the eyeballs moved, so did the ad dollars.”

Leads An All-Woman Team

Clarke-Hall, the dealmaker, leads an all-female negotiation team that also includes Danielle Brotzman and Taylor Sibbern.

“We always say that we have the best business development team in the industry — and Andrea is our fearless leader at the helm,” chief creative officer Adam Lewinson said. “A core pillar of the Tubi team, Andrea has not only established strong relationships with our partners but also significantly expanded Tubi’s footprint, bringing free streaming to even greater audiences.”

As Clarke-Hall noted: “Anywhere you see an application on a phone, on a TV, wherever you stream, there’s a deal behind that. And a relationship behind that which has to be managed.”

Clarke-Hall’s team works with Google, Apple, Roku, Amazon and other platforms, continually adding more. “We also do a lot of our international expansion work as Tubi is in Canada, Mexico, Australia and New Zealand,” she said.

Growth this year included building out live streaming news — News on Tubi — adding 20-plus national channels and 36 local channels around the country. She expects more than 80 local news channels by the end of the year. ●

CONGRATULATIONS

TO THE 2021 WONDER WOMEN LA HONOREES



TODAY WE CELEBRATE OUR VERY OWN:

ANDREA CLARKE-HALL

Tubi wouldn't be where it is today without Andrea fearlessly leading our business development team and we look forward to continuing to innovate with Andrea!

tubi + FOX

BREAKING THROUGH TOGETHER



Angela Courtin

VP of Brand Marketing
YouTube



By Addie Morfoot
@kamorfoot

The daughter of a career military officer, Angela Courtin moved every two and a half years as a child to different states and countries, subsequently becoming a citizen of the world.

Now, as the global head of brand marketing at YouTube, she gives the platform's 2 billion users the opportunity to also become worldwide citizens.

Courtin came to Los Angeles in 2000 after graduating from Oklahoma State University, garnering an MBA at the university's Spears School of Business, and a brief career in D.C. politics.

After working several assistant jobs, she eventually landed at HBO as an associate producer on *Big Love*. It was there that Courtin had a revelation.

"I was sitting on set, and I just knew that I would never have the eye for direction or a desire to be in front of the camera," Courtin said. "So, I started thinking about how we would promote the show in different ways."

That led to the creation of a digital ancillary storytelling experience, which marked the beginning of Courtin's instrumental career in entertainment marketing and branding.

Since then, Courtin has held lead positions at companies including MySpace, MTV, Dentsu Aegis Network U.S., Relativity Media and most recently Fox Broadcasting, where she served as the chief marketing officer.

Building community and connecting globally are two key components of Courtin's innovative marketing strategy — making her move to YouTube, with its



massive subscriber base and the platform's reach (over 100 countries in 80 different languages), a no-brainer in 2017.

"The thesis of my career has been about the architect of experience," Courtin said. "YouTube, given its scale, is a constant, evolving opportunity as a marketer. I don't think there's a better playground to play on."

Courtin helped lead the launch of YouTube TV, which included the historic partnership with Major League Baseball in which YouTube TV was the first-ever presenting sponsor of the World Series. That was followed by the first-ever

“YouTube, given its scale, is a constant, evolving opportunity as a marketer. I don't think there's a better playground to play on.”

presenting sponsorship of the NBA Finals. Courtin also oversaw the launch of YouTube Originals.

This year, Courtin spearheaded two YouTube Originals documentaries: Demi Lovato: *Dancing with the Devil* and Kevin MacDonald's *Life in a Day 2020*. Upcoming Originals include a special from the #YouTubeBlack Voices Fund and a six-part unscripted series starring Will Smith.

"We thought we might be telling more scripted programming in the very beginning of YouTube Originals by splitting between scripted and creator-driven content," Courtin said. "But we realized that what we need to be doing is doubling down on our platform and the storytellers on our platform."

"When new individuals want to come in and really be a part of this dialogue and this community, like the Will Smiths of the world, there is a place for them," she added. "But we're really leveraging the power of our platform and our storytellers to ensure that we are using that brand voice in the right way to amplify and invest in those stories."

Crafting a COVID Response

Courtin also has been influential in driving YouTube's response to COVID-19. When the pandemic struck and social distancing was a mandate, the platform combined the decade-old #WithMe movement (videos helping people at home to connect with creators) and the newly launched #StayHome campaign for two reasons: to help people connect globally and to persuade people all around the world to maintain social distance during the outbreak.

Courtin also played an instrumental role in YouTube teaming with Global Citizen on *Vax Live: The Concert to Reunite the World* to raise awareness about the importance of getting vaccinated.

"Angela is always looking to innovate and move us forward," Garth Graham, director and global head of healthcare and public health partnerships at YouTube, said. "She doesn't want to just do what other companies and brands have done before. She wants to break new ground." ●



Congratulations to our real-life Wonder Woman.
From all your friends at YouTube.

Jackie Donaldson

VP of Global Product Strategy
Disney Streaming



By Stuart Miller
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Jackie Donaldson was taking her son shopping recently when he looked out the passenger side window and said, “Mom, I see a leg in the road.” Donaldson sprang into action. “As soon as I opened my door, my son said, ‘Oh no, not again,’” she said. “He knows I will jump right in.”

The VP of global product strategy for Disney Streaming also happens to be the former chief of a volunteer fire department near her home in Virginia, with EMT training. “I still carry my medical bag around with me,” she said.

Fortunately, the leg was still attached to its owner, a motorcyclist who had crashed

“Being a woman in a male-dominated field is my secret weapon. Nobody sees me coming, and if I’m the only woman in the room I can easily differentiate myself.”

and was unconscious with a few broken ribs. She began a meticulous checklist examination “so I could figure out what direction to go in.”

That sounds like Donaldson’s approach to problems at work. Her job description says she is responsible for the strategic direction of the Disney Plus product across all regions, both domestic and international. She is more succinct. “I solve business problems. I am the fixer.”

“We lovingly call her Michael Clayton,” Roger Williams, senior VP of media operations at Disney Streaming, alluding to George Clooney’s movie role as a fixer for a law firm.

“She is our secret weapon,” Williams said. “We bring her in to correct a crisis across any area. She knows when to apply pressure, when to relent, and she finds a path that works for all parties.”

Growing up in London, Ontario, in Canada, Donaldson wanted to be a veterinarian. (Today, she owns five rescue horses, three dogs and five cats. “I sink all of my money into that.”)

She started in pre-med at McGill University, but quickly discovered she disliked studying chemistry.

“I ended up falling into sociology,

and what I found I had was a real aptitude for figuring out people, what makes people work or not work in a certain way. But I didn’t know what I was going to do with that.”

She earned a masters degree in international management and then developed her skills at companies such as Intelsat and Level 3 Communications. She spent 10 years at CenturyLink, holding leadership positions in the Content Markets Group, focused on sports and media.

“I quickly figured out that tech was a growing area and had very few women, so if I could just get my foot in the door I could figure out what I wanted to be when I grew up,” she said. Having played hockey against boys growing up, she was not easily intimidated. “Being a woman in a male-dominated field is my secret weapon. Nobody sees me coming, and if I’m the only woman in the room, I can easily differentiate myself.”

In 2018, Donaldson joined Disney as VP of partner platform solutions, a unit that managed strategic partnerships with Major League Baseball, Hulu, WWE, Sony, HBO, Verizon Communications and other third-party clients and partners.

Despite her willingness to take action, she wades into new situations carefully, studying the landscape and asking questions: “What’s going right, what’s going wrong and what keeps you up at night?”

Learning to Listen First

She had to learn patience and that listen-first approach. “I was the person who jumps right in,” she said. “In the schoolyard, I’d jump in to break up fights without thinking, ‘Hey, these two kids are much bigger than me.’”

Once she has her answers, Donaldson creates a vision of how to solve the problem. But she doesn’t dictate. “I go back out and start getting the buy-in.” She knows that building consensus is crucial to long-term success. “If you want to change the culture or dynamic of a group or system, you want to bring everyone along for the ride,” she said.

While the roles and the problems she solves have changed along the way, Donaldson has stayed true to herself and her method. “It’s not a quick or easy process, but I have confidence in it,” she said. ●



Dee Harris-Lawrence

Showrunner and Executive Producer
'David Makes Man,' OWN



By Paige Albinia
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Dee Harris-Lawrence proved she was a Wonder Woman when she took on the Amazonian task of running two shows at the same time—OWN's *David Makes Man* and CBS's *All Rise*. She agreed to do both before the pandemic hit, and it wasn't long before she found herself spending hours on Zoom with the casts and crews of both shows.

"I did say to people after that, 'If I ever say I'm going to run two shows at the same time, pull me off somewhere and slap me across the face,'" Harris-Lawrence joked.

Joking aside, for Tarell Alvin McCraney, *David Makes Man*'s writer and creator, Harris-Lawrence was the reason his show about a 14-year-old boy fighting to make his way out of the projects was able to go forward.

"We needed her," said McCraney, who wrote the play on which the Oscar-winning movie *Moonlight* was based. "She has a strong voice as a writer. She has a fascinating ability with systems and structure and I had never created a show for TV before.

"But what finally made us understand that this was the person who was going to guide our ship was that she had grown up in a very similar way to the show's main character," he added. "She just brought so much together in a way we desperately needed."

Harris-Lawrence, with her writer's ear for character, brought that same talent to *All Rise*, which starred Simone Missick as Los Angeles County Judge Lola Carmichael.

"Dee was such a breath of fresh air coming into the first season of *All Rise*,"



Missick said. "She immediately had a goal and a vision for my character that was innovative and specific to her being a Black woman in a position of power. That attention to detail was what I think allowed the audience to continue to fall in love with these people on a human level." (CBS canceled *All Rise* in May.)

Harris-Lawrence has been working in television for several years, starting as Quincy Jones's assistant and then working for Suzanne de Passe before briefly going

“I'm very systems-oriented but I also have always been obsessed with television, books and movies. I kind of toggle between my left brain and my right.”

out on her own to try her hand at writing screenplays. She was quickly called back to work as a writer's assistant on *Sister, Sister*, but she kept writing on her own. After producer Josh Goldstein happened to read a spec script she left out on her desk, he gave her a shot on teen series *Sweet Valley High* that helped get her going.

But first, she took a detour to get her MBA. After the first year, she scored a job as a writer on Fox's *New York Undercover* but, again juggling several things at once, finished the program.

"Having my MBA definitely helped in managing people," Harris-Lawrence said. "I'm very systems-oriented, but I also have always been obsessed with television, books and movies. I kind of toggle between my left brain and my right."

"She's just great at what she does," said Susan Rovner, chairman, entertainment content, NBCUniversal Television and Streaming, who hired her for both shows when she was president of Warner Bros. Television. "You know she's good because of the distinct quality of the product she puts out—the consistency of how good those episodes are, the fact that they are on budget, on time and creatively excellent."

Sought-After Skill Set

Having all of those skills in one person makes Harris-Lawrence a rare commodity in Hollywood, and with the current content explosion, ever more in demand.

Next up, she's heading into production on *Josephine*, a limited series she wrote about chanteuse Josephine Baker starring Ruth Negga. Harris-Lawrence is executive producing the series along with LeBron James and Maverick Carter's Springhill Productions, with Millicent Shelton directing. All three women—Harris-Lawrence, Negga and Shelton—are executive producing the series, which is in development at ABC Signature.

Said Harris-Lawrence: "It's a great blessing and a really nice position to be in, especially as we're all coming out of this pandemic. It's exciting to be able to really dig into all these other stories I want to tell." ●

Jaya Kolhatkar

Executive VP of Data

Disney Direct-to-Consumer & International



By George Winslow
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In recent years, companies like The Walt Disney Co. have realized that building new ways to deliver entertainment and video to consumers also required new ways of understanding their audiences.

That has made cutting-edge efforts to use data analytics, machine learning and artificial intelligence to better understand consumer behavior crucial to the success of streaming services like Hulu, ESPN Plus and Disney Plus, which users around the world are rapidly embracing. As of April 3 (the most recent figures available at press time), Disney Plus had 103.6 million subscribers and Hulu's subscriber count hit 41.6 million.

Jaya Kolhatkar, who heads up customer intelligence and all data and analytics-related efforts at Disney's direct-to-consumer services, has been pushing forward in a variety of ways since she took on her current role last summer.

One early effort was to bring all the data analysis teams into one organization to better share insights. Another was to provide a level of consistency across those teams. "We wanted to make certain that our definitions of key metrics were consistent, so you can move from one streaming service to another and be able to understand what is going on," she said.

The team also built a central repository for reports and data. "It makes it much easier to share those insights to the larger business teams" and to provide content creators and providers with better analytics that can help improve their movies and shows, she said.

Building closer ties between the various



streaming services in terms of data analytics also makes it easier to share successful tactics and marketing insights, a move that allowed older services like Hulu to transfer their expertise to newer streamers like Disney Plus.

Kolhatkar came to her current role at Disney with years of data science experience in financial services and at such companies as Amazon and eBay. She also co-founded a data analytics startup

“We wanted to make certain that our definitions of key metrics were consistent, so you can move from one streaming service to another and be able to understand what is going on.”

that was acquired by Walmart in 2013 where she worked until 2018, when she took the top data job at Hulu.

Looking forward, Kolhatkar noted that technological developments in terms of artificial intelligence, deep learning and other areas will provide Disney's streamers with even better tools in the future. But data scientists need to pay closer attention to some fundamental issues, she said.

"I feel we need to figure out how we blend humans and machines in a better way," Kolhatkar noted. "There needs to be a feedback loop between the two, so we can get the best from both. Sometimes we let the machines run and don't have enough human input."

The ethics of artificial intelligence as it relates to diversity are another area she is watching closely. "We have to figure out how we can make sure AI is leveraged ethnically and how we can make sure our algorithms are not targeting one group or benefiting one group," she said.

Encouraging Women in Tech

Companies also need to find ways to diversify their workforces and encourage women in technology. One aspect of this involves programs that would help women return to the workplace after taking time off to have families, she said.

"The pace of change in technology is so rapid that it is hard to come back after being out for three to five years," she said. "That's unfortunate, because these are very experienced women and a very valuable resource. Companies need to think about ways that they can use these valuable resources and provide them with the help they need so they can come back and join the workforce."

While women generally remain underrepresented in tech fields, Kolhatkar noted that data analytics tends to be more diverse and offers great opportunities. "There are a lot of roles in data that don't require you to have an engineering degree or a Ph.D.," she explained. "There is a diversity of roles that allow women to break through and grow careers." ●

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Amy Kuessner

Senior VP of Content Strategy and Global Partnerships
ViacomCBS Streaming



By Michael Malone
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Amy Kuessner established herself in satellite TV, spending eight years at DirecTV, and was assessing the next stage of her career. She stumbled upon streamer Pluto TV and found herself intrigued by its unique set of offerings.

"I was incredibly impressed by their value proposition," Kuessner said. "Particularly at a time when the entire marketplace was going VOD [video-on-demand] and paid, Pluto was free and linear. I thought that was an interesting business model."

Kuessner came on board as VP of content partnerships at Pluto TV five years ago. ViacomCBS acquired Pluto for \$340 million early in 2019, and today Kuessner is senior VP, content strategy & global partnerships, ViacomCBS Streaming.

"Drop in," goes the motto that greets users. "Watch free." Pluto offers a live TV schedule across a wide range of channels, video-on-demand ranging from James Bond movies to more current films such as *The Big Short*, and TV ranging from classic series such as *The Moonshiners* and *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* to contemporary stuff like *Hell's Kitchen*.

Pluto does not offer original content, but Kuessner stressed that it does offer loads of original channels. There are around 250 of them, focused on action movies, crime, food, romance and other categories.

"We really believe in the lean-back viewing experience," Kuessner said. "Drop in and find a variety of content."

Kuessner is focused on acquiring content for Pluto, and developing its channel strategy. In October, Pluto premiered seasons 1-5 of the Netflix hit *Narcos*. Last year, it added seasons 1-5 of *The Walking Dead* and *The Walking Dead Español*,

"We really believe in the lean-back viewing experience. Drop in and find a variety of content."

and seasons 1-3 of *Fear the Walking Dead*. A summer blockbuster movie campaign, including *The Hunger Games* and *Selma*, is set to launch. Kuessner said Pluto relaunched its block of Hispanic channels, debuting nearly 50 channels in May, and will increase its children's programming.

Movies, including those from Pluto's Paramount sibling, do well on the service, as does classic TV, such as *Three's Company* and *The Love Boat*. "What's old is new again," said

Kuessner. "People are gravitating back to the programming they knew years ago."

The Pluto TV sweet spot is users 25-44. Kuessner sees the platform as a companion to some pay TV services and a replacement for others. "We have a fair amount of news and movies and CBS shows," she said. "That could be an accompaniment to an SVOD service or a replacement to cable."

Kuessner was hopping on a plane in Denver every week to work in Los Angeles. That onerous commute is on hold amidst the pandemic, and she's enjoying time with her husband, 11-year-old daughter and two miniature schnauzers, and fine-tuning her culinary skills. Cooking is both a good and bad hobby, Kuessner said. "It's good because I love tasting different types of food," she said. "It's bad because I eat too much."

Crafting Win-Win Scenarios

Jeff Schultz, chief strategy officer and chief business development officer at ViacomCBS Streaming, said Kuessner is effective in her role because she consistently irons out partnerships where both parties benefit. "Amy is a very tough negotiator and a very savvy businesswoman," he said. "She's so successful because we have 250 content partners, and all of them are happy."

Both part of ViacomCBS Streaming Division, Pluto and Paramount Plus are increasingly working to benefit the group. Pluto offers the *Hannibal* series, which has helped promote the CBS drama *Clarice*, also part of the *Silence of the Lambs* universe, and will offer the *Hannibal* movie this summer.

"We are actively working with all divisions of the company on how to upgrade users and move users through the ecosystem," Kuessner said.

She's pleased with her assessment of the TV market, and her job prospects in it, from five years ago. "Something I believed would have a unique position in the marketplace turned out to be true," Kuessner said. ●





Congratulations
Amy Kuessner

from **pluto**  | **VIACOMCBS**

Audrey Lee

Executive VP and General Counsel
Starz



By Kelly Bennett
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Audrey Lee's story began when her parents emigrated from China. They came to the United States with nothing and did not know English, but worked hard to create a great life for the family. Lee was born in New York and lived there until about first grade, when her family relocated to California. Her father entered the aerospace industry as an electrical engineer, then retired from Boeing as a senior scientist working on the International Space Station.

Lee recalled being asked to help her father with some of the communications aspects of his work. "I remember being in elementary school helping my dad with memos," she said. "I would have to read them and make sure they sounded OK. I didn't know anything about the electrical part of it, but at least I could shape the rest of it."

Her parents expected her to enter medicine, but her skill in mathematics and sciences lacked, so she leaned more towards a legal career. She wanted to be a lawyer because law, she thought, was the great equalizer. "Now when I think about it, that sounds super naïve," she said with a chuckle.

After law school she went to work at a large corporate firm, Latham and Watkins in Los Angeles. There, she specialized in traditional corporate mergers-and-acquisitions securities work and governance. She stayed there for about five years before leaving for a new internet startup: IdeaLab, which had been a former client.

After IdeaLab, Lee joined Sony Pictures as a lawyer working in M&A and, at the



same time, got her business degree at UCLA. "Then I moved over to the licensing side of things, heading up distribution across home entertainment, television, some parts of theatrical, which all was very interesting," she said. An opportunity arose at content producer Lionsgate, with a chance to expand her range of duties, into such areas as production and development, video gaming, film financing and helping to launch four subscription VOD channels.

Three years ago, she became general counsel for Lionsgate-owned Starz, the premium programmer. Her work extends

“When I came to the job, we were only in the U.S., and within a year or two we were in 50 countries, so that was a massive legal endeavor.”

from litigation, securities filings, talent relations and employment matters to distribution deals. "This is what I love about my job. There is no 'typical' day, as it's so varied."

When the pandemic hit, Starz and other programmers were forced to halt production worldwide. Getting back to work safely and efficiently was job one.

The company worked diligently to create safety protocols, with groups ranging from governors' offices, local departments of health, inspectors, consulting agencies and guilds.

Lee said she was proud of her work helping to "get our shows back into production so quickly, safely, and really leading the industry in that regard. We had finalized our production protocols ahead of most of the industry, which I feel was a big win for our company. I am also very proud of successfully navigating some of the larger distribution renewals.

"We have closer to 25 shows now being produced without a hitch," she said. "Everything has been relatively manageable."

Leading a Global Push

She's also proud of helping launch the on-demand Starz Play service in more than 50 countries. "When I came to the job, we were only in the U.S., and within a year or two we were in 50 countries, so that was a massive legal endeavor."

"Audrey is a trusted and strategic executive who has been an instrumental part of our leadership team driving strategy for our business and legal affairs," Starz president and CEO Jeffrey Hirsch said. "A skilled and consummate professional, she has helped navigate the company through many sensitive and complicated issues including creating COVID Television Production & Safety Guidelines that allowed Starz to be one of the first studios in the country to restart production during the pandemic."

Lee is also a wife and mother of three, a 17-year-old girl and twin 15-year-old boys. She spends weekends at various pool decks around Southern California, watching and cheering on her kids playing water polo. ●

Alison Levin

VP, Global Ad Revenue and Marketing Solutions
Roku



By Paige Albiniak
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Ask anyone about Alison Levin, Roku's VP of global ad revenue and marketing solutions, and they'll tell you the same thing: She says yes first and figures out how to get there later.

"Ali has always had an 'anything is possible' kind of attitude and I think that's because she's innately curious about how she can support brands and help them accomplish their goals," said Cara Motowidlo, enterprise account executive at marketing technology software firm Braze, who worked with Levin at digital advertising platform YuMe. "She's always reaching for what others might deem impossible. She's never afraid to go there."

Levin was the first salesperson hired by Roku in 2014, and upon arriving she rolled up her sleeves to build the sales team from scratch. Among her first two hires were Jared Lefkowitz, now senior director, ad revenue strategy, and Jon Goodstat, now global director, ad sales — media and entertainment.

"Early on in my time at Roku, I realized my path to success was through her," Lefkowitz said. "I realized that she had it figured out and it was on her to go build something. I just mirrored what she was doing for the first couple of years. Even when she has a gigantic problem to solve that would normally stress someone out, she is willing to work with the ambiguity of not knowing how or where it will go."

"She's smart, humble and fearless," Goodstat said. "There's not really a no in her. It's more, 'How do we figure it out, how can we be solutions-oriented?'"

Today, Roku is one of the leading connected-TV platforms with a reach of 53 million households. Brands can reach consumers on

“ Roku has been able to attract people ... who are so curious and excited to build this business from the ground up. We're trying to change buying behavior that has existed for 65-plus years.”

the platform through two key ways: on the Roku home screen and on The Roku Channel. In addition, platform providers jockey for position on the Roku home screen, especially since Roku powers some 30% of smart TVs sold in the past year, including sets made by TCL, Insignia, Hisense, Hitachi, Philips, RCA, Sharp and more.

"I knew that I knew how to execute and bring products to market," Levin said, having joined the company after a three-and-a-half-year stint at digital advertising platform YuMe. "Roku has been able to attract people ... who are so curious and excited to build this business from the ground up. We're trying to change buying behavior that has existed for 65-plus years."

That behavior does seem to be changing, with brands such as Kroger, McDonald's, MillerCoors and BMW signing up for custom campaigns.

And Roku is growing fast. It launched its own Brand Studio in March to create custom content for advertisers; it acquired the OneView advertising platform in November 2019 and unveiled a branded version a year ago;

and it just debuted Roku Originals, based on its acquisitions of the Quibi and This Old House libraries, on May 20.

Leading from the Front

Even as Levin has climbed up the ranks at Roku, she tends to lead from the front lines.

"She still rolls up her sleeves every week and has a call with our head of product every week," Goodstat said. "That's unique to have someone in her position who is still very attached to her field sales days, and that resonates with our whole team."

She also has the confidence to hire people who can fill in her knowledge and experience gaps to create a well-rounded team.

"In her leadership role, she has not been afraid to hire leaders under her that come from areas that she doesn't come from," Goodstat said.

"That comes with that humility — she knows what she knows and what she does not know. A lot of times for executives there's a paranoia about that, but that's not how she operates. She looks at it more like, 'This person is going to help move things forward for all of us.'"

Said Levin: "The No. 1 thing that drives me is the ability to build and we are constantly building. We're seven years into this business and we've only just gotten started." ●



Susan Levison

Senior VP, Head of WWE Studios
WWE



By Addie Morfoot
@kamorfoot

When choosing which projects to produce, Susan Levison, WWE senior VP and head of WWE Studios, thinks about it from a selling and buying standpoint. “We have to be aggressive and constantly talking to the marketplace and pushing our projects forward in that seller mode,” Levison explained. “But we also want to be really thoughtful about the content we pursue and bring a buyer’s discernment to what we develop and produce. Being on both sides of the table has been really helpful in my career and at WWE.”

Prior to joining the pro wrestling promotion’s production arm in 2019, Levison bought content while working at VH1 and sold content during her tenure at CBS Television Studios.

“We have sold multiple projects in the last year, from animation to light action comedies to documentaries, and we could not have done any of that without Susan’s guidance and oversight,” Richard Lowell, VP of development and production at WWE Studios, said. “As sellers, a lot of preparation goes into a project before we take it out to market. With Susan’s experience from both the buying and selling side, I’ll work hand in hand with her taking her lead on the details to make sure we have the best chance of success in that.”

At WWE Studios for just over two years, Levison developed a variety of projects across genres in original scripted and non-scripted formats for global distribution. Highlights include the multi-camera comedy series *The Big Show Show*, starring WWE superstar The Big Show, and a live-action film titled *The Main Event*, about an 11-year-old who enters a competition to become the next WWE

“One of the best parts of my job is that we get to develop projects across all genres of storytelling. And we aren’t confined to a specific tone.”

Superstar. Both the series and film can be found on Netflix.

Netflix “is really excited to be in business with us because they know the extent and the power of our reach,” Levison said. “We have over a billion social media followers across all platforms and are the fourth-largest YouTube channel with over 75 million subscribers. So, they want to harness the power of the WWE and put our content where viewers can find it.”

By creating shows and movies that appeal to not only core in-ring fans, but also audiences unfamiliar with the pro wrestling brand, WWE Studio content can be found on various networks and streaming service platforms including Netflix, E! and most recently A&E.

Last spring, WWE Studios partnered with the network to launch *Most Wanted Treasures* starring Stephanie McMahon and Paul “Triple H” Levesque, and *Biography: WWE Legends*, eight original two-hour documentaries about WWE stars.

Levison’s path to the entertainment industry wasn’t traditional.

After graduating from California’s Pomona College, she received a master’s degree in English at Boston University with a plan to get a doctorate in poetry. But after quickly realizing that academia didn’t

suit her, Levison pursued a career in the television business.

“I had absolutely no idea how to go about it,” she said. “So I went down to the Barnes & Noble and I bought a book on internships.”

Learning on the Agency Side

Levison eventually moved to Los Angeles to intern for film producer Michael Phillips. That was followed by assistant work at CAA.

“I always tell kids who want to get into the entertainment industry to work at an agency, because you’re essentially being paid to go to grad school,” Levison said. “You learn how to be an assistant. You learn how to look at material. You learn how to talk to people. It taught me everything.”

Levison was overseeing upcoming WWE Studio projects that include a multipart documentary chronicling the life of WWE’s chairman and CEO, Vince McMahon, for Netflix. In addition, the production company in conjunction with Paramount will release the animated feature film *Rumble* in February 2022.

“One of the best parts of my job is that we get to develop projects across all genres of storytelling,” Levison said. “And we aren’t confined to a specific tone. That said, our brand is very much aligned with the idea of putting smiles on people’s faces all around the world. So, we do tend to gravitate towards projects that are inclusive, fun, and really entertain people at a time when people need it so much.” ●



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Pooja Midha

Chief Growth Officer
Comcast Advertising



By Mike Farrell
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One term that could be used to sum up Comcast Advertising chief growth officer Pooja Midha's career is also screamingly appropriate in today's streaming video world: In demand.

A veteran of the TV ad business, with stints at ViacomCBS, Disney/ABC Television Group and ad-tech firm true[x] before joining Comcast Advertising in March, Midha has been in demand as both employee and employer. That's partly due to her business successes: For example, as president of true[x], she led the company to record revenue and income levels and to acquisitions by and integration with The Walt Disney Co. and then Gimbal.

Comcast Advertising CEO Marcien Jenckes hired Midha in March 2021 to oversee global marketing across Comcast Advertising's Effectv (local ad sales) and FreeWheel (ad-management solutions) components. Jenckes said he had been trying to find a spot for Midha at Comcast for years.

"She is amazingly intelligent, she understands the dynamic of the industry very well and can see around the corner into the future and what we are going to need to be successful," Jenckes said. "She understands, and we are very philosophically aligned on this front, that the best way for our industry to be successful is to work together, not work at each other's expense."

Jenckes pointed to Midha's ability to not only attract good people to work with her, but to inspire loyalty that has lasted over several positions at several employers.



Take, for example, Rick Mandler, currently VP of growth strategy at Comcast Advertising. He first worked with Midha at Disney/ABC, moved with her to true[x] and then joined her at Comcast.

"We have each other's backs," Mandler said. "She's very determined and really focused on getting stuff done, but she's also a very caring and humane person. That's a rare combination for a leader to have."

A former boss, retired ABC Sales

"I thought that learning how to sell, not so much a product, but your idea, your point of view and how to negotiate, would be a useful skill to have."

president Geri Wang, first met Midha on a flight to CES in 2011. In their conversation, Wang was struck not only by Midha's intelligence but by her ability to articulate a path to get things done.

Over the next few months, Wang worked hard to bring Midha to her team, finally hiring her away from Viacom [now ViacomCBS] as senior VP of digital ad sales.

"Each time we met it was more and more cement for our relationship," Wang said. "I had great confidence that if Pooja joined the team she would be a superstar, and I was right. She made the team better by joining ABC and just as importantly, she made the business better."

Midha might have never even had the chance to find her success in the advertising business if not for a little serendipity.

A native of Saskatchewan, Canada, Midha graduated from Lehigh University with a degree in international business. What drew her to advertising was equal parts practicality and happenstance: She wanted to stay in the U.S. and figured working for a big company would allow her to do just that. She picked ad sales, she said, because she figured it would give her skills that could be utilized in practically any career path she chose.

Learning to Sell, And Sell Yourself

"I thought that learning how to sell, not so much a product but your idea, your point of view and how to negotiate, would be a useful skill to have," she said.

The advice of a mentor led her toward the ad tech business, figuring it would be good to understand not just the technology behind the ad business but how it fit into the overall process.

"It opened up this whole new side of the business for me and tons of things that I was interested in that I didn't even realize," she said. "It moved me closer to the part of the business that was always more interesting to me, which is where the change and transformation was happening." ●

Cathy Oh

VP, Global Marketing & Analytics
Samsung Ads



By Kent Gibbons
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Cathy Oh has the kind of Wonder Woman biography that starts with a summer internship at Bravo and now, less than two decades later, sees her in a global management role, in the red-hot category of smart TV ads, at consumer-electronics giant Samsung.

You might have seen her pitching new ad formats on Samsung smart TV sets at the Samsung Ads digital newfronts presentation this past May, including sponsorships on the Samsung TV Plus ad-supported VOD platform. Samsung Ads messages can reach more than 50 million smart TVs, employing data to help target ads and measure results.

"If I really broke down what we do, we look at connected TV and connected devices within the household and identify what are the different viewing behaviors and insights and learnings, and that's really what marketers and brands are looking for today as they look at how they are going to initiate new campaigns," Oh explained to WABC journalist CeFaan Kim in a July 2020 Zoom interview for The Korea Society, published on YouTube.

Since discovering a love for marketing at that college internship, Oh has been learning her craft and chasing the hot technologies.

She was present at the start at Samsung Ads as one of the original five executives in the six-year-old unit that's now an international organization with over 500 employees, as she told Kim. Before that, she was in the mobile space. She led the first sales marketing organization aimed at advertising at Apple, as head of marketing for iAd, Global Brands & Agencies.



What started at Bravo progressed through sales leadership roles at NBCUniversal properties including iVillage and Syfy before moving to WebMD. "That was probably where I fell in love with product marketing, understanding different softwares and tools," she told Kim. (Oh, who was on maternity leave, was unavailable for an interview for this article.)

Holding high-powered global jobs hasn't kept Oh from helping others within and outside of her company, including on the

"We look at connected TV ... and identify what are the different viewing behaviors and insights and learnings, and that's really what marketers and brands are looking for today."

board of the Korean American Community Foundation, a philanthropic organization that helps lower-income Korean-Americans and Asian-Americans.

President Kyung Yoon said, "What really sets Cathy apart is her tremendous heart and her generosity, how much she cares about her community and particularly lifting up those who are vulnerable, and to making the world truly a better place."

Oh's digital savvy also was helpful in the pandemic when the foundation had to turn to virtual fundraisers, which were a big success, Yoon said.

An Entrepreneur Who Leads

Samsung Ads senior VP Tom Fochetta said that "as a leader, entrepreneur and marketing pioneer, it's no surprise as to why Cathy received this honorable recognition," as a Wonder Woman.

"As one of the founding leaders of Samsung Ads, Cathy has been instrumental in our company's revenue growth, the development of our brand, helping build and manage successful teams around the globe and working in tandem with marketing, sales and product development to further demonstrate why Samsung Ads is a leader in advanced TV," he said.

"She is also a champion who values and encourages true diversity of thought. She serves as an example for other young women daring to leave their mark in the office and within the community. ... Cathy truly embodies you're never too young to follow your dreams."

Oh also is proud of her role as a founding member and executive sponsor of Women+, a Samsung Employee Resource Group designed to mentor and support women within the organization. Women+ has grown to include women and men from 13 cities and eight countries.

Holding a bachelor's degree from Carnegie Mellon University's Tepper School of Business and a master's degree in integrated marketing from New York University, Oh also is on the advisory board for Conscious Step, the Brooklyn-based sock maker that supports numerous charities and causes. ●

Duan Peng

Senior VP of Data & Artificial Intelligence
WarnerMedia



By George Winslow
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As more companies launch direct-to-consumer services, experts in data analytics such as WarnerMedia's Duan Peng will be increasingly important to the future of the media and entertainment industry.

"The media is in a transformational journey to a direct-to-consumer focus, and data is really the core and center of this whole transformation of the business," said Peng, who runs rapidly expanding global data and artificial intelligence teams at HBO Max.

Like a number of others who have assumed prominent positions in data analytics at media companies, Peng came from a background in economics and the financial services, areas that have long embraced the use of big data.

After getting a bachelor of arts in international economics at Beijing Normal University, she moved to the U.S. to get a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Miami in Florida in 2007, studies she said that fueled her lifelong "fascination" with using data and statistics to understand economics and consumer behavior.

Peng then moved into the financial services industry, honing her expertise in data analytics at Hyundai Capital America, HSBC and Ameriprise Financial. By the middle of the 2010s, though, she was becoming fascinated with the idea of using her skills in the entertainment industry. "There was starting to be a lot of innovation in media with a lot of newer technologies and direct-to-consumer business, so I made the jump from Wall Street to Hollywood," she said with a laugh.

In 2016, Peng joined NBCUniversal-owned Fandango. She led and built up Fandango's data science analytics team before moving to Fox in 2018, where, as VP of data, she led a data analytics team that worked on the

"The media is in a transformational journey to a direct-to-consumer focus, and data is really the core and center of this whole transformation of the business."

launches of subscription services FX Plus and Fox Nation.

After Disney acquired 21st Century Fox's cable-network and studio assets in 2019, Peng was named VP of data at Disney's DTC operations. She led teams for data science, machine learning, AI engineering and analytics for such services as Disney Plus and ESPN Plus.

Since joining WarnerMedia in 2020, Peng has



led global data and AI groups that are playing a central role in the global launch of HBO Max, which had about 44.2 million subs at the end of the first quarter of 2021. The company is now forecasting 120 million to 150 million subs by 2025.

Whether the recently announced merger between AT&T's Warner Media and Discovery will make it easier to beat those projections is an open question. But there is little doubt that data analytics and consumer insights will play a key role in HBO Max's future as it launches an ad-supported version, and as the merged Warner Media and Discovery operations work to expand their streaming services.

Bettering the HBO Max Experience

In the meantime, consumer insights have already improved the HBO Max experience. After the launch of HBO Max in 2020, Peng's teams developed better, more personalized content discovery tools and algorithms that made it easier to find content and boosted viewing.

Another success has been the creation of tools and insights to help the company "improve the way they acquire and develop content to drive acquisition and engagement," Peng said.

Looking forward, Peng is also excited about ongoing improvements in AI and data science, which will help companies improve and automate more processes so they will be able to quickly improve their streaming products.

"You will see more and more use cases for machine learning, automation and AI that will help drive the business," she said.

Peng is also excited about all the young women she sees entering the industry.

"I love that more women are coming into this space and being part of this exciting transformational journey in the media industry," she said, adding this advice to younger women: "Don't be afraid. Just stand up for yourself. Be yourself and continue learning and growing. There are going to be some really great career paths for you." ●

WARNERMEDIA
WARMLY
CONGRATULATES
DUAN PENG

SVP OF DATA & ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AND ALL THE 2020
MULTICHANNEL
NEWS WONDER
WOMEN HONOREES.

WarnerMedia

Romina Rosado

Executive VP, Entertainment and Content Strategy
NBCUniversal Telemundo Enterprises



By R. Thomas Umstead
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Romina Rosado is arguably among the most influential executives in Spanish-language television today, in charge of organizing NBCUniversal-owned Telemundo's programming content across linear, social and streaming platforms.

"Romina is a seasoned executive that deeply understands the Latino audience and their evolving media consumption habits," said NBCUniversal Telemundo Enterprises president of entertainment and content strategy Ronald Day. "Her expertise in the omnichannel media space makes her the perfect leader to oversee our content strategy across all platforms."

One would assume that an executive with such an impressive pedigree would have spent many years in entertainment, but Rosado's industry journey only began a little over a decade ago.

Growing up in Northern Germany — her parents are from Spain — she had no Hollywood aspirations. "I didn't even know that was a career option for me," she said.

Recognizing the value of learning English (Rosado is fluent in four languages), her parents had sent her to the United States every summer. At 16, she stayed with a family in Los Angeles, a city she would call home two decades later. Her career began in London, though, as a public relations executive in 2000.

She set her sights on moving to the U.S. in 2001. "I was supposed to move to New York on the day 9/11 happened," Rosado said. "After that horrible event, I didn't actually move until March 2002."

Seven years later, Rosado got her first taste of show business. In 2009, she said, a former colleague persuaded her to take a job at Wenner Media's *US Weekly*, running the entertainment publication's digital business.

"I had no idea about entertainment," Rosado said. "I didn't know who Kim Kardashian was."

“Throughout my career, what I like to do is I like to figure things out. I like taking on complex solutions and then putting them together.”

The digital platform was still in its infancy, but Rosado said she took on the challenge and grew along with it. "The market started changing really quickly, and I'm actually proud of what I was able to do there," she said.

Her success and perseverance caught the attention of NBCUniversal, which lured her to Los Angeles in 2012 to be VP of E! Online. Three years later, Rosado would ascend to senior VP of global content, overseeing all E! news and branded content creation across all platforms.

In 2018, then-Telemundo chairman Cesar Conde approached Rosado to head up digital news for the Spanish-language network. "Then last year [Telemundo] basically said, 'Content is content, so we want to move you and your entire team into programming,'" she said. "That's the role that I do now: Thinking about content regardless of what platform it ends up on."

Added Day: "She lives and breathes our content and makes sure her team keeps our audiences' needs and preferences at the forefront of our programming efforts."

Up for a Challenge

Throughout her career, Rosado said, she's always believed in her abilities and never shied away from challenges. Going forward, she looks forward to further challenging

herself within the entertainment world.

"In the short- to medium-term, I'm very excited about the opportunities in streaming, obviously with Peacock and other streaming services," she said. "Throughout my career, what I like to do is I like to figure things out. I like taking on complex solutions and then putting them together. The media industry as a whole right now is in a pivotal and interesting time, for good and bad, and that motivates me every day to figure it out."

Rosado is also passionate about mentoring the next generation of female executives. Young women today should explore as many career opportunities as they can, she said, including those they may not have thought about previously.

"Always stay very open to any possibility," Rosado said. "I see a lot of people make the mistake of getting hung up on what it is they think they want to do. I think it's super-important to be curious about the world." ●



Michelle Wroan

Managing Partner, Los Angeles

KPMG



By Holly Stuart Hughes
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After more than 20 years at KPMG, working for the Big Four accounting firm's auditing and consulting services, Michelle Wroan has developed a keen appreciation for what it takes to weather adversity. "Resilience is one of my favorite words," she said.

Before she was named managing director of KPMG's Los Angeles office in October 2020, Wroan had spent two years as national media industry leader for KPMG's media division. In that time, Wroan counseled media and entertainment companies on how to navigate disruptions "and remain productive without getting stuck in the negativity or difficulty of it," she said. KPMG's clients include film, TV, broadcast, entertainment, advertising and publishing companies, both startups and legacy firms, publicly and privately held.

When COVID abruptly shut down entertainment venues and productions last year, Wroan and her team encouraged their media clients to brace for a long lockdown by focusing on "the 4 Cs:" costs, cash, capital and customers. "It was about preserving the cash you had and finding the liquidity you needed," she said. That meant trimming costs or pausing capital improvements. To improve customer relations, they reviewed clients' subscription and renewal plans.

One client, a company focused on ecommerce and streaming services, has experienced "phenomenal growth," Wroan said, but increased demand

"We're always having to flex and change as the industry is evolving and our clients are evolving. We have to stay one step ahead of them."

presented its own challenges. "That direct-to-consumer relationship is new for many of these companies," she noted. "When you are talking about such a high volume, how can you effectively engage with all these new consumers?"

Understanding the challenges that face clients of "all shapes and sizes" is the part of the job that Wroan most enjoys. "We're always having to flex and change as the industry is evolving and our clients are evolving," she said. "We have to stay one step ahead of them."

Wroan studied economics at UCLA and got her MBA at the Wharton School, but said joining KPMG's audit services in 1993 gave her a different kind of business education. Conducting audits give her a window into many job functions and corporate cultures.

"I can walk in and pretty quickly assess what the tone at the top is," she said. "If you have leaders at the top who exude a certain tone, it creates a different mood. Employees and teams react to those explicit messages and the implicit messages, too."

An inflection point in her career came when she was offered a three-year

rotation in KPMG's New York office. "It was the best decision for me professionally," said the Los Angeles native. Learning new job skills in a new city provided a lesson in resilience. "I came back to an L.A. with an open mind, and was willing to raise my hand for other opportunities." Soon after, she became industry leader of the media division.

When she succeeded the retiring partner Mark Hutchins as the head of the L.A. office, he praised Wroan as "a mentor to countless professionals, and a compassionate and strong leader." Wroan believes that forging personal connections among employees is essential to creating a place where people want to work. "It's everyone's job to be a mentor," she said. "That's advice I'd give any organization."

A Passion for Mentoring

Wroan's love of mentoring inspires her volunteer work for women's organizations. Since convincing KPMG to sponsor the Women Founders Network, she has judged the nonprofit's annual Fast Pitch competition, where female entrepreneurs practice pitching to venture capital investors, and coached female business founders. She is on the board of the Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles and heads its finance committee. A former Girl Scout herself and the mother of two boys, Wroan enjoys giving back to a program that helps girls develop "self-reliance and resilience — to use my favorite word again."

After a year that tested everyone's resilience, Wroan believes the clients who put effort into crisis management last year are now well-positioned to accelerate growth during the economic recovery. As businesses cautiously reopen, Wroan said she and her team are working "to understand the new world."

She added, "I think we have a lot of change management processes to go through." ●



Deborah Norville

Anchor, 'Inside Edition'

Wonder Women of L.A. Woman of Influence



By Paige Albiniak
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When the pandemic hit New York City last March, CBS Media Ventures's *Inside Edition* had to shut down and then quickly scramble to stay on the air. Anchor Deborah Norville — Wonder Women of Los Angeles's Woman of Influence — immediately began shooting shows from her home in New York, and as it became clear that the pandemic was out of control in the city, she and her husband decamped to a vacation home.

"We left New York and temporarily moved out of state because it was too scary," Norville said. "Initially, they were having me go to a local facility and I was very uncomfortable with it. I saw COVID at every turn, and I have some health issues that make me high-risk."

In 2019, after a viewer spotted a questionable-looking lump on her neck, Norville underwent surgery to remove a cancerous nodule from her thyroid.

"Sometimes you have to influence things in your own world," Norville said. "I couldn't get the higher-ups to agree with me to shoot remotely [last year], but I knew we could do it. In the beginning, they wouldn't budge and I was scared so I thought, 'I am going to have to trick them into it.'"

Norville, who has anchored the top-rated syndicated news magazine since 1995, set about proving why what she wanted could be accomplished at mutual benefit to her and to the company. She set up a studio in her home with the *Inside Edition* backdrop on a big-screen TV behind her. She shot herself using her own high-definition camera and light kit and sent both to multiple executives at CBS and asked which one they preferred.

When everyone said they liked her home setup better, without knowing where it had

"I feel empowered to speak up in ways I hadn't been. I am much less reluctant to share my thoughts ... Doing that makes you more influential."

been shot, she revealed how she had done it and said she could do it every day at a substantially reduced cost to the company. That convinced them she no longer had to leave the safety of her house to go into a studio.

"Those first days and weeks were really challenging, but it was so inspiring, because everyone had their hands on the oars and we were all pulling in the same direction," she said. "We had the objective that we were going to do the best TV show that we could do and that people at home would feel like they are watching the same *Inside Edition* that they always had."

That experience also reinforced a lesson for Norville: "I feel empowered to speak up in ways I hadn't been," she said. "I am much less reluctant to share my thoughts. If I feel strongly about something, I feel strongly that I need to share it with the appropriate parties. Doing that makes you more influential."

Asked which women have influenced her, Norville mentioned three: Diane Sawyer, Barbara Walters and her mother, Merle O. Norville.

"Diane Sawyer was not just a trailblazer but she made it possible for a blonde to be smart on television," Norville said. "Until she joined CBS

News, women were not allowed to be knowledgeable and to be the smart one."

"Barbara Walters opened the door to anyone who wasn't a white male," Norville said, also noting that when NBC replaced Jane Pauley with her on *Today* in 1990 to public outcry and then replaced her with Katie Couric just 14 months later, Walters sent her a note of encouragement to the effect of "don't let the bastards get you down."

"I've always been grateful to her for that," Norville said.

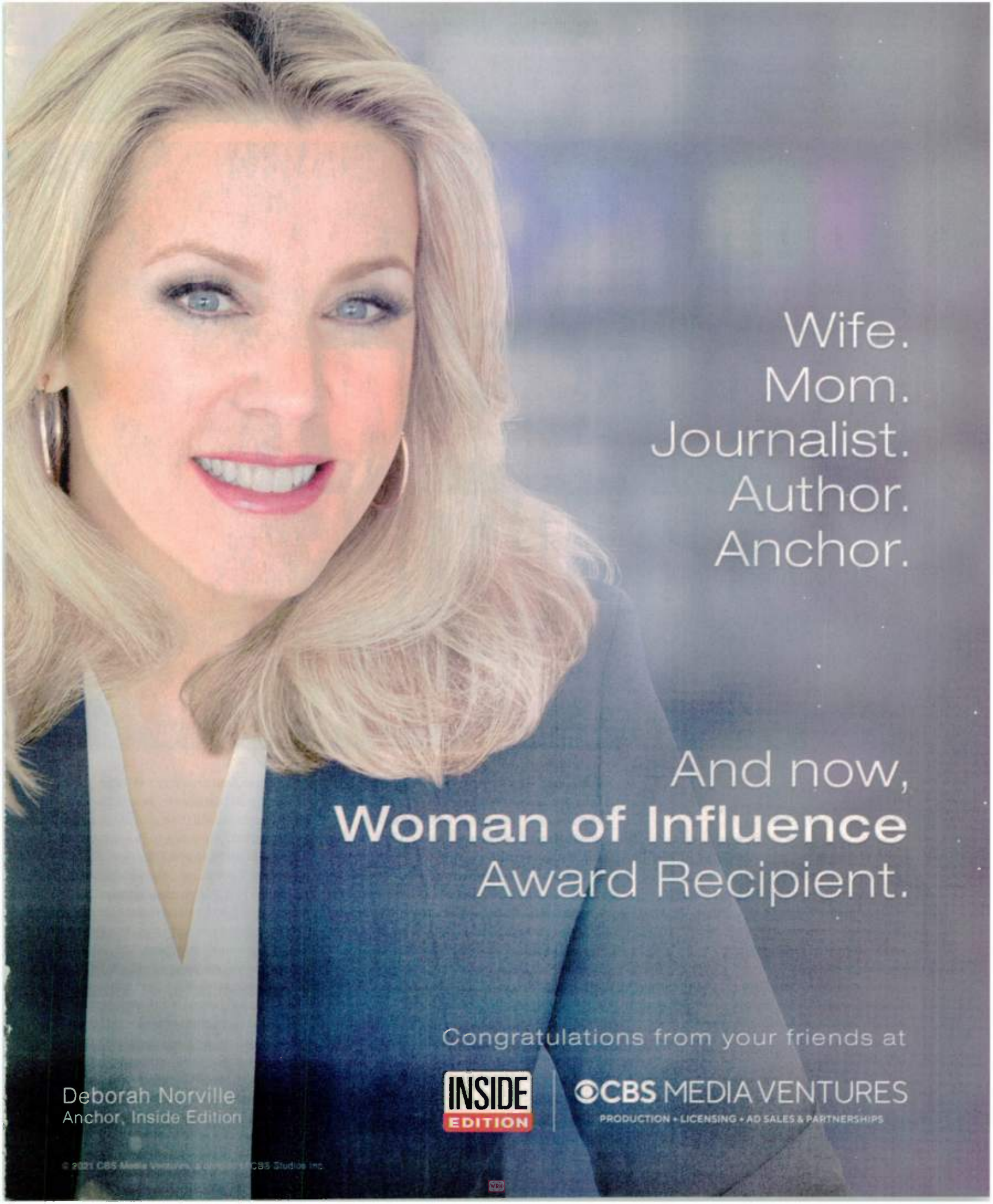
Mom a Key Influence

And as for her mom, "she was a career woman back in the '50s before women were career people," she said. "She was a vice president of merchandising for Buster Brown, which was unusual back in those days. She raised her four daughters to be independent and self-sufficient."

Norville's mother died of complications from severe rheumatoid arthritis when Norville was 20, after several years of debilitating health problems.

"When I've had challenges in my life, I've always thought of my mother," Norville said. "She just kept going. I think that's good advice for anyone dealing with a challenge — just keep putting one foot in front of the other." ●





Wife.
Mom.
Journalist.
Author.
Anchor.

And now,
Woman of Influence
Award Recipient.

Congratulations from your friends at

Deborah Norville
Anchor, Inside Edition



CBS MEDIA VENTURES

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BRINGING SPORTS SAVVY TO THE OFFICE

Past athletics experiences proved seminal for Women in the Game honorees



By Stuart Miller
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For this year's Women in the Game profile subjects, looking back on the past year naturally meant thinking about the impact of the pandemic. But when they looked back even further, they reflected on the impact of playing sports at an early age on their careers.

At CAA Sports, Alexa Cook said there was no slowing down during the pandemic. "Our group had the biggest year since its inception, orchestrating over \$1 billion in sponsorship revenue," she said. "We just kept going."

Still, the pandemic naturally upended most plans. Julie Stewart-Binks had just finished

constructing a set for her new FuboTV talk show, *Drinks with Binks* — she even helped with the painting — when the pandemic hit. "We ended up doing the show for the next 14 months from my apartment," she said. Working at an upstart network enabled her to be more flexible with the show, tinkering with the format as everyone adapted, and the pandemic actually had a side benefit. "We were able to get more guests from all over the world because they didn't need to be here to get to the studio," Stewart-Binks said. "I'd just send an email, saying, 'Here's a link, click on it.'"

Micky Lawler, president of the World Tennis Association, said that even as the women's tennis tour had to cancel events and adjust on the fly, officials worked on rebranding and new content for sponsors to replace canceled events.

Beth Hutter, lead producer for Golf Channel, said that live events won't be fully back to normal until the end of the year or even until 2022, changing her work dynamic tremendously. But Ndid Massay, senior director of Workplace Culture and Diversity Initiatives for CBS Sports, said the new normal may benefit women in the long run.

"I have kids and always tried to do some work from home," Massay said. "With some supervisors, there was a little bit of a fight. But the pandemic showed the world how effectively we can work from home and in the future there will be less of a fight for women."

Time spent playing sports helped prepare these women to fight for what was rightfully theirs at work. "All the facets of playing



sports transfer over," Stewart-Binks, who went from being a competitive figure skater in Canada to playing hockey with both boys and girls teams (she still plays in a men's league in New York), said. "You have to figure out how to handle new situations and you have to be prepared to work hard and give up a lot of your social life."

Hutter, who lettered in softball and soccer at the University of Virginia, also said sports taught her about hard work and preparation. "We practiced all facets of the game, day in, day out, to be ready for everything," she said.

Melanie Capacia Johnson, head of Whistle Studios at Team Whistle, played basketball and volleyball and was a sprinter, long jumper and triple jumper. "In high school, I had the most amazing hops and they called me Thumper," she said. Two children later, she said, "I miss those

hops," but the years of sports gave her a "drive and tenacity competitive edge" and taught her about teamwork. "It's how I run the studio," Johnson said. "All our productions are very collaborative."

Cook earned a college scholarship and was an NCAA Division I four-year Scholar Athlete, serving as the president of student athletes and captain of the women's swim team at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Beyond the on-field lessons, she said, college sports opened her eyes to professional possibilities. "Prior to that, sports was just fun for me, but building a relationship with the athletic director, being the West Coast Conference rep and going to big NCAA meetings, I saw this whole business side of sports," Cook recalled. "That actually piqued my interest in the whole

industry. I was a finance major and really thought I was going into investment banking — it's where I was interviewing — but sports was more interesting than portfolio management and this experience made me pursue my career in sports."

Massay led Northwestern University's softball team to the NCAA Women's College World Series as a catcher and was inducted into Northwestern's Athletics Hall of Fame. She later served as assistant softball coach while getting her law degree at the University of Notre Dame. "I grew up in the [San Francisco] Bay Area as a tomboy playing every sport under the sun with the boys and girls in my neighborhood," she said. "The boys did not treat me differently when we played tackle football on the asphalt. That made me tougher and more aggressive."

"Playing sports shaped everything in my life," Massay said. The experience had helped her as a woman in the boardroom, because she can talk sports with men with enthusiasm, knowledge and credibility. Beyond the ease in those conversations, the lessons learned are innumerable.

"It's not just teamwork, leadership skills and discipline, it's learning how to win but also learning how to lose, and to learn from your losses," she said. "That all transfers into the boardroom."

ALEXA COOK

Property Sales Executive, CAA Sports

KEY STATS: Within the past 24 months, Alexa Cook has generated more than \$300 million in sponsorship revenue from three dozen partnerships, bringing together brands like Adobe, Amazon Web Services, Grubhub and Kia, and clients like Formula One and Red Bull Racing. She has brokered close to \$100 million in esports deals, including Riot Games' League of Legends Championship Series' first-ever official beer partner (Bud Light); first-ever exclusive automotive partner (Honda); first-ever official energy drink partner (Red Bull); and first-ever official insurance partner (State Farm).



Cook was central to the team that negotiated more than \$1.3 billion in sponsorship deals for Chase Center in San Francisco, the Golden State Warriors' new arena. Last year, the Oklahoma native built a partnership between CAA Sports and the Oklahoma City Thunder to launch the Thunder Fellows Program, to give opportunities in sports, technology, and entertainment for Black students around Tulsa, working with the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission.

VARSITY STATUS: Cook has worked at CAA Sports since 2010, starting as an assistant, going through the mailroom program and working her way up over the past decade. She opened the CAA Dallas office in 2017.

IN HER OWN WORDS: "CAA is the only place I've known, so I don't know what it is like for other women in the industry, but for me it has been pretty darn incredible. Since day one, our leadership has been the most supportive possible, not just at this moment in time.

"For each one of my clients there was a large learning curve — I had never heard of Formula One or esports before I came here — but at the end of the day, our business is so relationship-driven, and so we're not working with the organizations, we're working with the people that are there.

"Our group is founded on innovation, so we want to listen and learn from each pocket of the industry. When esports came about, we were lucky enough to be working with the leader in the space, Riot Games, and that allowed us to become pioneers in the space. It's all about adapting and innovating and learning. Every deal feels like a miracle when it's done, but it's so much fun working on them."

BETH HUTTER

Producer, Golf Channel

KEY STATS: Beth Hutter is the lead producer for NBCUniversal-owned Golf Channel's LPGA Tour events, a role she has held since 2005. Hutter has also produced several PGA Tour and PGA Tour Champions events, making her the first woman to produce a PGA Tour event for television.

In 2021, Hutter is responsible for live tournament coverage of the ANA Inspiration; the U.S. Women's Open; the KPMG Women's PGA Championship; the Evian Championship; women's golf for the Tokyo Olympics; the Solheim Cup; and the CME Group Championship. She serves on the board of the Lady Legacy Scholarship Foundation in Birmingham, Alabama, raising money for college scholarships for girls in golf.

VARSITY STATUS: Hutter began her TV career at News 12 Long Island before joining ESPN, where she worked from 1996 to 1999 as a production assistant for all studio shows, including

SportsCenter, Baseball Tonight, Monday Night Countdown, RPM Tonight and ESPNNews. She joined Golf Channel in 1999, initially in a variety of production roles for both live events and studio shows. She was a studio producer for Golf Central and an associate director, feature producer and replay producer/director for live tournament shows.

IN HER OWN WORDS: "I started working on Wall Street because I had a B.S. in finance and marketing, but I hated it. I hated being indoors all the time, after playing sports 24/7. I had taken some video classes in college so I went to News 12 and said, 'Hey, I don't know that much about your industry so here's what I'm willing to do: I'll show up for six months every day, you don't have to pay me a dime, let's call it an internship, and after six months, hopefully you like my work.' They thought it was a great idea.

"We were the

smallest TV station in the biggest sports market. It was nonstop and they didn't have enough reporters, so they'd send me out. That was the year the Jets went 1-14 and finally I was the only one there on Mondays for the press conferences and it was such a joke that ESPN started running them and I got a few contacts at ESPN. Eventually, they hired me for their production assistant program. Later, Golf Channel had hired a ton of golf nuts who knew how to do research but didn't know how to do television, and they needed TV people who knew some golf but could produce for their Golf Central show.

"Being a producer for live sports is always fascinating because I can prepare as much as humanly possible, but you never know what's going to happen. I try to make sure everyone is ready: the more you prepare, the easier it is to adapt on the fly. So I inundate myself and try to prepare for every scenario. Even when it's exciting, I try to be as even-keeled as possible."



MELANIE CAPACIA JOHNSON

Head of Whistle Studios, Team Whistle

KEY STATS: Melanie Capacia Johnson heads the scripted, unscripted, animation and interactive studio business for Team Whistle, a next-generation publisher, agency and studio, specializing in telling 360-degree inspiring stories in sports and entertainment. She oversees the production from Whistle, Tiny Horse, Vertical Network and New Form. With Team Whistle being acquired by multinational broadcaster Eleven Sports (owned by Aser Ventures), Johnson will be in charge of the company's U.S. content. Under Johnson the studio has produced projects with Dwayne Wade (*Legacy*), Carmelo Anthony (*Fight Ball*) and Steph Curry (NAACP Image Awards-nominated *Benedict Men*) that span across premium streaming services, Snapchat, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and Whistle's owned channels. Whistle Studios and Insight TV are partnering on *Making (Her)Story*, a docuseries following three rising female athletes

competing in the male-dominated sports of horse, NASCAR and Formula 4 racing.

VARSITY STATUS: Johnson was the cofounder of Tiny Horse in 2011 and sold her company to Team Whistle last year. She started out as an independent film producer before working on live and unscripted programming at Viacom, working on programs like the MTV Movie Awards, MTV Video Music Awards, Hip Hop Honors, Rock Honors, VH1 Divas and Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Awards.

IN HER OWN WORDS: "We had been working with Whistle since 2016, creating authentic content for people watching on



digital. We were being courted by several companies for acquisition and where Whistle was headed was the best fit: we were very like minded. But when I came in the four companies under Team Whistle were working in silos and not talking to each other so I've been putting it all together collectively, shaping new goals and aspirations.

"I came up in traditional linear production and saw a lot of line producers and producers yell and scream and throw things. That's not how you build a team that will be excited to come to work every day. I can provide stern feedback when needed but I'm not a yeller, I find a solution. As a woman in charge, I am communicative and let people know they will be heard. I do have a nurturing side, creating a safe space. Maybe that's just me being a mother."

MICKY LAWLER

President, World Tennis Association

KEY STATS: As president of the World Tennis Association since 2015, Micky Lawler has overseen commercial growth and marketing of women's tennis, including several rebranding campaigns. She has helped expand the geographic footprint of women's tennis, most notably with a historic investment partnership for the WTA Finals in China, while crafting specialized rights deals (like the one for StatsPerform data rights recently in 2020) and commercial partnerships like Porsche Race to Shenzhen, all while leading to closer collaboration with the men's tour.



VARSITY STATUS: Lawler was working as a language teacher in Paris in 1985 when she saw an ad for a job as a press officer with the Men's International Professional Tennis Council. She got that job and after two years there, spent nearly 27 years at Octagon, overseeing all aspects of the sports agency's Tennis Division, including player representation, event management and international business initiatives across Octagon's sport and entertainment platforms. Prior to assuming the WTA presidency, Lawler put in 11 years as a WTA board member.

IN HER OWN WORDS: "It's

certainly possible, considering the deep-rooted passion my family and I have always had for sports and strong female role models like my grandmother, women's tennis might have found me. Either way, I'm incredibly fortunate and grateful to the universe for its divine intervention with that ad early on.

"At Octagon, I had the opportunity to work closely with specific athletes from beginning to end, which offered a deeper understanding of what individual players need at every turn from a holistic approach: workload management, commercial opportunities, marketing, public relations, etc.

"I also learned the importance of adapting and aligning to a players' journey, whether it be humble beginnings in a single market, or global star power that transcends one's sport. These were invaluable learnings for my role as board member at the WTA and soon thereafter as president."

NDIDI MASSAY

Senior Director of Workplace Culture and Diversity Initiatives, CBS Sports

KEY STATS: The role of senior director of Workplace Culture and Diversity Initiatives for CBS Sports was created with the hiring of Massay, who began in February and will drive the strategic planning, development, execution and measurement of CBS Sports initiatives toward a more diverse and inclusive workplace. She will create tailored strategies, programs and experiences, reporting to CBS Sports chairman Sean McManus and president David Berson.

VARSITY STATUS: Massay has deep experience in this field, running her own consulting business to provide diversity, equity and inclusion counsel, services and training to corporate entities, national governing bodies and collegiate athletic departments. She had served as the commissioner of the New York State Athletic Commission since 2016. Prior to that, she helped launch the Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality

(RISE), a nonprofit that works to improve race relations throughout sports by promoting understanding, respect and equality, and was a diversity- and-inclusion consultant for the NFL. Earlier in her career, Massay was director of business affairs for ABC News and director of business operations and development for ESPN, after working as an attorney on issues related to both sports and entertainment law and diversity and inclusion matters.

IN HER OWN WORDS: “I started to focus more on diversity, equity and inclusion (D, E and I) about 10 years ago, because there started to be jobs and career opportunities in the area but also



because the older I got, the more I thought about making a difference — making lasting change rather than just doing a job. Over the last year as civil unrest has really exploded, the D, E and I space has moved to a whole different level. I was working for NYSAC but still doing consulting and

wanted to focus on it full time. Katrina Adams [Women in the Game, 2017]

is a good friend and sent this to me. The job description read like it was written for me. I wanted to build something here like I did at RISE and take CBS to the next level.

“I’ve been in those interviews where I felt it was a checkbox. I did not take those jobs: I don’t want to be a check-box person. I

want to be in a role where I have resources, commitment and support from senior management. Sean and David are 100% committed to this. It’s real and it has teeth. We want to create a more diverse workforce at all levels and to create a more inclusive culture.

JULIE STEWART-BINKS

Host, ‘Drinks with Binks,’ Fubo Sports Network

KEY STATS: Julie Stewart-Binks is the host of *Drinks with Binks*, an interview show that premiered with the launch of Fubo Sports Network in 2019. She also anchors *Call It a Night*, a late-night show that earned a Telly Award, and *Ball Is Back*, a series that highlights the return of major tournaments and sporting events.

VARSITY STATUS: Early in her career, Stewart-Binks was a reporter on Fox Soccer’s *Fox Soccer Report* in Winnipeg; a program assistant at CBC’s *Hockey Night in Canada* and a sports anchor and reporter at CTV in Regina, Saskatchewan. She later was one of the original anchors and reporters for FS1 and hosted the 2014 Sochi Olympics and reported on the 2015 Women’s World Cup. In 2015, she also

became Fox’s regular sideline reporter for Major League Soccer matches, before moving to ESPN, where she was a sideline reporter for MLS as well as the U.S. men’s and women’s national soccer teams and college football. (She is the first female reporter to call two straight MLS Cups with two different networks. Fox and ESPN.) Stewart-Binks moved to Barstool Sports as the host of *Barstool Breakfast* on Sirius XM in 2017 before leaving to train in improv comedy and try her hand at stand-up as well.

IN HER OWN WORDS: “Growing up, I wanted to win at the Olympics in figure skating and track and field. When I realized that wasn’t going to happen, I got a double degree in physical and health education and drama. Everyone laughed at me, but it’s now the bread and butter of what I do. I wanted to go

into sports psychology, but my mom, a radio reporter, said you should volunteer at the local radio station at the university. They said, ‘We have too many volunteers, try the TV station.’ And the TV station said, ‘We need someone to do an interview tomorrow.’ The adrenaline rush of being on camera, gearing up for the live moment, reminded me so much of my sports days. I realized I wanted to do this and became a campus sports reporter.

“When I left my job to learn improv, it was because I wanted to become better at listening and responding: When you’re doing interviews, it’s the key to everything. Before this, I had the opportunity to go to a traditional network and do more traditional work. But I met with Pamela Duckworth [Women in the Game, 2020] and she was so warm, smart and powerful and she’s a woman, and I’ve always, except once, had male bosses. I wanted to be around this trailblazer. I do feel a bit of onus: I want to help give back too. I like to feature women and as many Black journalists on my show as I can. I want to use my show for good, or else what’s the point?” ●





CONGRATULATIONS
NDIDI
AND ALL OF THIS YEAR'S
**WOMEN IN
THE GAME**

 **CBS SPORTS**

Have Plans for the Weekend? The CW Does

Going seven nights a week means no gaps on promotional strategy



By Michael Malone
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The CW expands to seven nights a week this fall, adding two hours of primetime programming on Saturdays. *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* and *World's Funniest Animals* hold down the Saturday slots when The CW's new season begins in October.

Mark Pedowitz, chairman and CEO of The CW, called it "the most significant change" for the network when addressing the press in late May, and a long-term wish for The CW. "Expanding to Saturdays was the goal for us for the past decade," he said. "We're excited about the possibilities this opens up for our affiliates and our advertisers."

As part of the arrangement, The CW returns the 3-4 p.m. ET/PT weekday slot to affiliates. Pedowitz said affiliates were "pretty much on board" from the get-go.

DuJuan McCoy, owner/president/CEO of Circle City Broadcasting, which owns CW affiliate WISH Indianapolis, said he initially had a mixed reaction, but ultimately sees it as a benefit. On the down side, the station offers a lot of local sports on Saturday nights, while on the upside, the daytime shift means Jerry Springer departs WISH.

"We're super-psyched because now The CW is a full-on, seven-day-a-week network," said McCoy. "And I like that WISH is getting the extra hour back in daytime. We can produce special local content for that hour, maybe news, maybe lifestyle."



That's the strategy at Nexstar Broadcast Group, which owns and/or operates 37 CW affiliates. "Nexstar fully supports The CW's decision to provide primetime programming every night of the week, including Saturdays, and to return the weekday afternoon time period to local CW affiliates, which we largely plan to use to offer more local programming," the broadcaster said in a statement.

Gray Television's WUAB Cleveland has *The Big Bad B-Movie Show* on Saturdays, with a couple hosts poking fun at a dreadful horror movie. That will back up a bit to 11 p.m. when The CW takes over Saturday prime. Erik Schrader, WOIO-WUAB VP and general manager, called it "a natural progression" for the network, and believes *Big Bad B-Movie Show* will do fine in the later slot. "It just shows the network has a commitment to primetime," he said. "The more original content we can get in prime hours, we will definitely take."

Leading The CW's efforts to expand were Betty Ellen Berlamino, CW executive VP, network distribution, and Ann Miyagi, senior VP and general counsel.

Long-running improv show *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* is part of The CW's new Saturday schedule.

The CW added Sunday nights in fall 2018, slotting *Supergirl* and *Charmed*, Pedowitz noting at the time that both featured "empowered women." The final 13 episodes of *Supergirl* start rolling Aug. 24 and *Charmed* will be on in the mid-season.

New CW shows for 2021-2022 include a remake of missing persons drama *4400*, an adult version of Nickelodeon competition series *The Legends of the Hidden Temple* and a redo of British murder-mystery game show *Killer Camp*.

Promo Opportunities

Saturday is mostly a rerun wasteland on broadcast TV, but The CW sees opportunity. Pedowitz said programming Saturdays permits the network to market itself every night of the week. "It allows us to, in essence, promote and market our Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays without the gap of Saturday," he said.

About the Saturday shows, Pedowitz said *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* has worked in every time period it has been in, and *World's Funniest Animals* was a "surprise hit" in the past year. The CW will consider scripted shows on Saturdays down the road, he said.

Rob Tuck, head of national sales at The CW, described the Saturday move as a win. "From a sales perspective, it's great to have the extra two hours," he said. "The two hours are not just on linear, they are on digital. With our ability to do full stacks, this will provide us with more additional inventory on the digital platform, which is great."

Pedowitz believes both network and station partners benefit from the move. "Over the long term," he said, "I think everyone will make it work." ●



REVIEW

'FLACK'

(Season two available June 11 on Amazon Prime Video)

Season two of *Flack* picks up with Robyn, played by Anna Paquin, in a tight spot both at work and outside of work. The season starts with a bang: A warehouse is raided by police, a powerful Mills Paulson client is inside and needs his PR firm to bail him out.

Robyn holds the phone in one hand, advising the client, and a pregnancy test strip in the other. Her life is about to change yet again.

The crises come fast and furious on *Flack*, upping the anxiety level for PR acers Robyn and Eve, and Mills Paulson boss Caroline — and the viewer, for that matter. It's not an easy watch.

Flack, which had its first season on Pop TV before shifting to Amazon Prime, may not work for the many viewers seeking happier, lighter fare amidst these troubling times. The dramedy is chock full of sleazy characters, but one finds oneself rooting for Robyn to pull it together — and perhaps find more wholesome employment, though that would not make a very compelling show.

The dialogue is snappy and full of clever put downs. Asked a how Robyn is faring, Eve, played by Lydia Wilson, thinks about her colleague and responds, "Good ol' dead-eyed tight-lipped, drown-everyone-around-you-in-a-black-sea of self-involved, self-destructive self pity Robyn."

Daniel Dae Kim turns up as an Elon Musk-ish tech titan who has ticked off people on Twitter, and Sam Neill plays Caroline's dying ex-husband, with Sophie Okonedo playing Caroline.

Six-episode season one premiered on Amazon in January. Oliver Lansley created the show, and portrays nattily dressed drug dealer American Mike.

Paquin fills Robyn with steely determination. *Flack* is over the top and a lot of fun, and London is a lovely backdrop to its many scuzzy dramas. — MM

ABC's 'Celeb Dating Game,' 'Holey Moley' Offer Stress Relief

Steph Curry has major plans for mini golf, teases showrunner Wachter



By Michael Malone
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Mid-June is a happening time for Charles Wachter, executive producer and showrunner on ABC's *The*

Celebrity Dating Game, which premieres June 14, and miniature-golf show *Holey Moley*, which starts season three June 17.

Zoey Deschanel and Michael Bolton host *The Celebrity Dating Game*, which ABC described as "a wry wink at modern dating with a star-studded roster of celebrity singles in their pursuit to find love."

Singles include Taye Diggs, Iggy Azalea and Nicole Byer. They remain a mystery as a lucky bachelor/bachelorette is chosen from a hidden panel of three, based on their answers to the celebrity's questions.

Deschanel's work includes playing Jovie in *Elf* and Jessica in Fox comedy *New Girl*.

Bolton sings what Wachter calls "parody love songs that are riddled with clues" — classic power ballads rewritten for the show.

"His voice is unreal," Wachter said. "He kills it."

The Dating Game premiered on ABC in 1965. Wachter calls the reboot "a hint

at nostalgia, a look back at a safer time."

Holey Moley is back as *Holey Moley 3D* in 2D. The show "exists in an alternate universe where mini golf is god," said Wachter, "where there's no greater pursuit or passion on the planet than mini golf."

Hoops star Steph Curry is back as golf pro and exec producer. This season, tongue planted firmly in cheek, he aims to bring mini golf to the big leagues — seeking big-city franchises and giant stadiums as he plans on making mini golf the next big pro sport in America.

"It's all in the service of having a good time," Wachter explained.

Rob Riggle and Joe Tessitore return as color commentators. "Joe and Rob are just en fuego," said Wachter. "They have such a fantastic rhythm with each other."

Jeannie Mai is back as sideline correspondent.

Wachter said *Holey Moley* and its contestants are relatable to viewers of all ages, as they putt for par while eluding obstacles. "You can see yourself on the

show. You can see yourself get nuked by a windmill on fire," he said. "We want everyone who watches the show to see themselves."

Wachter believes both *The Celebrity Dating Game* and *Holey Moley* arrive at the right time for America.

"There's a lot of stress in the system," he said, "and people want to laugh and want to relax." ●

The Celebrity Dating Game





Scripted Shows Shine Spotlight on Sisterhood

New series hone in on African-American female friendships



By R. Thomas Umstead
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Black women may not run the world yet, but they are certainly making their mark in several scripted series that explore the complexities of female friendships.

In Starz's new series *Run The World*, BET's veteran show *Sistas* and BET Plus's *First Wives Club*, with ABC's series reboot of *Waiting to Exhale* in the offing, the camaraderie between girlfriends seems to be appealing to all viewers.

"Black women continue to occupy an important and seminal space in culture, and our point of view is unique but also universal in terms of our struggles and our stories," BET scripted programming head Traci Blackwell said. "Your sistagirl group is usually one of the most

important relationships in your life, and I think those stories continue to be relevant to audiences."

While the genre is not new — 1990s broadcast TV shows *Girlfriends* and *Living Single* were successful in exploring the dynamics of Black female friendships — Starz president of original programming Christina Davis said this new wave of shows goes more in-depth into not only the relationships themselves, but the culture which influences the character storylines. Davis said Starz's *Run the World*, which launched last month and follows four 30-something, professional Black female friends as they deal with career and relationship challenges, incorporates the rich culture, sights and sounds of Harlem as an important backdrop for the storyline.

"You can point to a couple of shows that have scratched the surface, but I think we go deeper than anything that we've seen before," she said. "I also think

Starz's *Run the World* follows the lives and ambitions of 30-something young Harlemites.

the appetite for such shows is overwhelming in a great way."

BET's *Sistas*, produced by Tyler Perry, returned for its third season June 9 having averaged a network-high 1.4 million total viewers on a Nielsen Live-Plus-3 basis during its second season. The series follows a group of single Black women as they navigate their career, friendships and relationship goals.

Shows like *Sistas* and *First Wives Club*, a takeoff on the 1996 movie that's now in its second season, serve as a window into lives of diverse female relationships that aren't often represented on television, according to Blackwell.

Other scripted series, like HBO's *Insecure* and OWN's *Delilah*, explore the bonds between Black female friends as part of broader storylines within the show. But executives say the overarching theme of maintaining that close and often unbreakable bond — even as it's tested in a variety of ways — resonates with viewers.

"I think television owes it to the viewers to give back to them moments of their own lives," said Craig Wright, creator of *Delilah*, which examines the strength of a long friendship between two lawyers even as they face off in court. "It's the lived moments that make viewers say that's just like what happened to me or she's just like my sister or friend."

The genre doesn't show signs of slowing down: ABC has given a script commitment to *Waiting to Exhale*, a reboot of the 1995 Lee Daniels film that starred Whitney Houston, Angela Bassett, Lela Rochon and Loretta Devine. BET's Blackwell says shows examining the complexities of friendships between women will always find an audience on television.

"For women, and particularly Black women, relationships, family, raising kids, dating challenges, religion and spirituality are all things that touch the group in really interesting ways in terms of how we relate," she said. "The story of that female bond continues to be really important and feels relatable to all of us." ●

Cleveland Is Rocking And Rolling

Big-time events reveal true colors of city on Lake Erie



By Michael Malone
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Cleveland residents have long seen their city as bigger than others perceive it to be, and outsiders are finally seeing it on a bigger stage. The city hosted the NFL draft this past spring, and offers the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction in October.

Micki Byrnes, president and general manager of WKYC, calls Cleveland “a big city with a small-town heart.”

Cleveland-Akron, Ohio, is DMA No. 19. Nexstar has Fox affiliate WJW. Tegna holds NBC outlet WKYC. Scripps owns ABC station WEWS and Gray Television has CBS affiliate WOIO and The CW-aligned WUAB. Spectrum is the primary pay TV operator.

With a “Cleveland’s Own” brand, WJW is a ratings beast. In April, the station took the 6-7 a.m. races in households and 25-54 easily, and won the tighter 5 p.m. contests too. WEWS won 6 p.m. in both categories. In late news, WJW won 25-54 easily, while WEWS posted a 3.83 in households, virtually level with WJW’s 3.80. WKYC had a 3.53 and WOIO a 2.31.

“Our anchors and meteorologists have developed strong bonds with our viewers, almost



Tracy McCool (l.) and Lou Maglio deliver the news at Cleveland market leader WJW.

like an extension of the family,” said Paul Perozeni, WJW VP/general manager. “We know this market because most of our staff, both on air and behind the scenes, were born and raised here.”

WJW’s rivals are upping their game. WEWS won three regional Edward R. Murrow Awards. Steve Weinstein, WEWS VP/general manager, said News 5 is focused on enterprise journalism. “We’ve made a really big push in this market, a huge journalism push with support from our company,” said Weinstein.

WEWS is the Browns station. Residents talk about the football team all year round. “We were the partner when they were not doing so great,” said Weinstein. “Now we’re the partner when they are doing great.”

Jodie Heisner became WEWS news director

last year after Sean McGarvy moved up to Scripps corporate.

WKYC has covered the eventful past year-plus with signature programming such as *The Turning Point*, a monthly special on race with regular updates, and weekly public affairs show *We the People*.

“Everyone has taken a deeper look at themselves and their organization in terms of how we were covering certain stories and dealing with certain issues,” Byrnes said. “It has allowed us as a station to dive a little deeper.”

WKYC added 5 p.m. news in January 2020. A “triad” oversees news: Adam Miller is director of content, John Adkins is director of broadcast news and Denise Polverine oversees digital news.

WJW offers 12½ hours of local programming daily, including morning staple *New Day Cleveland*. “The show has developed a very strong connection with loyal viewers,” said Perozeni, “that value local content over national syndicated shows.”

WOIO-WUAB airs MyNetworkTV and Me TV on subchannels. WOIO added 3 p.m. newscasts and WUAB debuted an 11 a.m. edition. Reaching mobile users is a focus. “We definitely understand where the viewers are going,” said Erik Schrader, VP and general manager. “We’re focused on providing as much local content on our OTT station as possible.”

WOIO local shows include *Cribbs in the CLE*, hosted by former Browns player Josh Cribbs.

The Cleveland economy is moving forward. Byrnes said it traditionally hits neither the high highs nor the low lows.

General managers describe a lively foodie town full of diverse neighborhoods and upbeat people. “Cleveland is so completely underrated,” Schrader said. “There are lots of advantages of a really big city without the drawbacks.” ●

WKYC OFFERS MORNING NEWS ON THE ‘GO!’

WKYC HAS REBRANDED its newscasts, with the morning program called *Go!*, the 5 p.m. *What’s New*, the 6 p.m. *What Matters Most*, and the 11 p.m. program bearing the name *What’s Next*.

The rebrand happened late in

2019. At the time, Adam Miller, director of content, said the shift was focused on delivering viewers “more solutions, more perspective, more hope and even more fun.”

Micki Byrnes, president and general manager, said 3News did it as much

for newsroom staffers as for viewers. “It’s a filter in terms of our editorial decisions as much as it’s a branding effort that explains to viewers what we hope to give them,” she said.

Byrnes said the rebranded newscasts remind viewers what they’re tuning in for. “It gives each show its own kind of personality and emphasis,” she said. — MM



(From l.): Danielle Wiggins, Maureen Kyle, Hollie Strano and Dave Chudowsky make up the morning team at WKYC.

Sinclair Pushes Its 'Stack' Of Digital Over-the-Air Nets

Category should get boost from ATSC 3.0



By Jon Lafayette
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While many in the TV business are investing billions in subscription streaming services, big broadcasters are focusing on free over-the-air digital channels.

Sinclair Broadcast Group has been investing in its digital channels — Comet TV, Charge and TBD — and is seeing a healthy increase in advertising revenue since getting ratings from Nielsen and upgrading their programming. In June, for example, Charge is adding CSI: Miami to its schedule.

“What we’ve tried to do with these networks is level up the programming to make them general-market worthy,” Scott Ehrlich, Sinclair senior VP, growth networks and content, said.

Sinclair is calling its channels The Stack in their first-ever upfront presentations. The 70 one-on-one meetings are aimed at getting media buyers to understand that digital channels offer familiar programming and a growing number of consumers are looking for free entertainment.

“Cord-cutting isn’t necessarily our goal as a company, but over-the-air is a quickly growing segment of the audience,” Ehrlich said, noting that Sinclair generates significant revenue in retransmission consent for its stations and subscriber fees for its regional sports networks.

“There’s a technology change coming that we’re highly invested in as a company that is certainly going to



enhance the over-the-air experience,” he added, referring to NextGen TV.

Sinclair and other stations have started converting stations from the current broadcast format, ATSC, to the NextGen ATSC 3.0 standard. Sinclair expects half the country to be covered by ATSC 3.0 in 2022.

“This is a new part of the company and the part that’s obviously pretty exciting,” said Adam Ware, VP and general manager, national networks and platforms at Sinclair.

Multicasting Is Now a Business

Digital multicast channels have been around since the broadcast industry went digital in 2009. Most of the early channels subsisted on direct response advertising. More recently, larger broadcasters have been accumulating larger portfolios of channels.

In its first-ever upfront for its digital multicast channels, Sinclair will sell would-be advertisers on “The Stack.”

The E.W. Scripps Co. bought Katz Broadcasting in 2017 for \$292 million. Katz’s networks include Court TV, Bounce, Laff and Escape. It plans to launch two more channels, Defy and TrueReal, in June. Tegna launched Twist in April following its \$77 million acquisition of Justice Network and Quest in 2019.

Comet TV launched in 2015. The science-fiction channel was owned by Sinclair and managed by MGM Television. In 2017, Sinclair and MGM launched Charge, which focused on action films with a sense of humor. Sinclair took over management of both channels in 2020. TBD, a youth-oriented channel, launched in 2016, owned by Sinclair and operated by Jukin Media.

Comet TV began getting Nielsen ratings in 2018, with Charge following in 2019 and TBD in 2020, letting the channels sell a mix of direct response and

general-market advertising.

"General-market advertisers really started to look at these channels' audiences, as opposed to the responsiveness of those audiences," Ehrlich said.

According to Nielsen, after Comet TV started airing episodes of *The X-Files* in the 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. time period, viewing among 18-to-49-year-olds rose 357% second quarter to date, compared to the first quarter. After TBD added *Wipeout* and *Fear Factor* from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m., viewing in the demo rose 46% from Q1 and 103% from a year ago.

TBD in particular is more attractive to general-market advertisers because of its relatively young audience. Those young viewers were less likely to call an 800 number or log onto a website because of a direct response ad, Ehrlich said. The audiences of the channels are pretty distinct, he added.

Sinclair doesn't break out revenue figures for its digital networks, but Ware said they've gotten a good response in

the scatter market and revenues have exceeded the budget so far.

Comet TV, Charge and TBD are also multiplatform with a presence on Stirr, Sinclair's streaming service, where some of their programming is available on-demand nationally.

Ware said the opportunity for free-over-the-air channels will expand as NextGen TV takes root. ATSC 3.0 promises bandwidth for stations to carry more networks and makes it easier for viewers to tune them in.

"All of a sudden you've got real capacity," Ware said. Now is the time to be proactive and launch channels, build their brands and get more digital channels to market. "Some might be paid and some might be free," he added.

More Nets In the Offing

Sinclair is looking to launch more networks. The company is using Stirr to test channel concepts with an eye towards them becoming distributed as digital OTA networks, Ware said.

At some point, the networks will produce original programming, Ehrlich said. TBD dipped its toe in the water with a clip show called *The Link* and interstitial content featuring David Hasselhoff, star of *Knight Rider*, which aired on Charge.

To some degree, the digital broadcast channels are mirroring the way cable channels were built in the 1980s, targeting genres such as science fiction and comedy and relying on off-broadcast programming until the market demands original series.

Digital channels will be easier to watch because they're being integrated with streaming channels in increasingly sophisticated smart TVs. But Ware warns, "If you don't own a station group and you're trying to do these, good luck."

And channels are thriving because "there's real content out there that people want to watch," Ehrlich said. "I was sort of skeptical, a little bit, until I started to see the numbers." ●

FREEWHEEL SEES BEGINNINGS OF PROGRAMMATIC UPFRONT

AS MORE TELEVISION inventory becomes digital, it's only a matter of time before the upfront, where the majority of national ad sales get done, becomes programmatic, said Dave Clark, general manager of FreeWheel, Comcast's ad tech company.

"I think we're seeing a shift in a major way this year," Clark said, noting the growing amount of connected TV and addressable advertising the networks plan to sell. "It's hard to say exactly how much we think it's going to shift this year. But next year or the year after, we'll look back at this year as the year it really kind of broke."

Some parts of the upfront don't fit the usual programmatic pattern,

he conceded. Most programmatic transactions are designed to maximize the short-term prices of available inventory, while the upfront is designed to allow advertisers to reserve inventory early, getting lower prices in exchange for predictable revenue for the networks.

And some things can't be automated. Price negotiations between six major agencies representing 200 clients and six big media companies won't be "biddable," Clark said.

But once those handshakes are achieved, programmatic systems can execute those buys in a way that enhances the yield for sellers and effectiveness for buyers, according to Clark.

"That's where the computer can be very, very helpful, driving value for both sides. There's a lot of test and learn that needs to happen but the value is pretty clear so I think it's inevitable." Some of that learning

is already taking place, with networks setting up private marketplaces for advertisers that have already struck upfront deals. FreeWheel, which handles ad

insertions for most of the big TV companies, has designed a version of programmatic, called Premium Programmatic, that works for the upfront, Clark said.

In their May presentations, networks said buyers have expressed a willingness to transact either by traditional insertion orders or via automated systems.

"There's been a ton of interest in discussing setting up with us and using our technology to transact with our publishers," he said.

NBCUniversal, also owned by Comcast, already uses FreeWheel to automate the ad decision-making for its broadcast and cable networks, noted Clark, who was one of the speakers at NBCU's One 21 event highlighting advertising and technology. "NBC is moving very aggressively," he said. — JL



Dave Clark

MVPDs Find Margin of Victory in Broadband

Streaming shift could help operators weed out unprofitable video customers



By Mike Farrell
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Cable operators should embrace the coming shift from traditional MVPD distribution to streaming for the simple reason that it could help them remove what has been a thorn in their side for years: relatively unprofitable video customers.

While cash-flow margins were once in the 40%-plus range for video service when that was the only product in the cable arsenal, that measure of profitability has slipped to around 30% over the years, while broadband service has margins that hover near 90%.

Video subscribers have wildly different levels of profitability based on their level of service. Though cable operators don't break out cash flow and margins for video, it is evident that overall cash-flow margins have grown as more and more operators have switched emphasis from video to broadband.

Cable One, the first publicly traded operator to make that shift way back in 2013, today has by far the biggest cash-flow margins in the business: 52.9% in Q1. That's nearly 10 percentage points higher than Comcast, which reported a profit margin of 43.2% in Q1 and has more than 75 times the number of video customers (19.4 million, compared to 252,000 for Cable One) and 35 times the broadband subscribers (31 million, compared to 880,000 for Cable One). According to its financial statements, in Q1, 74% of Cable One's total residential

customers didn't take a video product.

Proof that de-emphasizing video has a margin impact is evident across the board. Comcast has grown its overall margins from 40.3% in Q1 2017 to 43.2% in Q1 2021; Charter Communications grew margins from 35.9% in Q1 2017 to 39.5% in Q1 2021; and Altice USA boosted cash-flow margins from 41% in Q1 2017 to 43.4% in Q1 2021.

Video's Tough Economics

Cable operators have complained for years that they don't make enough from video to put up with the hassle from programmers. And though no one has done a truly deep dive into the margin differences between super-premium and bare-bones basic video tiers, it seems pretty logical that the more video a customer buys and the longer they stay, the more profitable they become.

"The reality is that margins are what they are, programming has always been the biggest expense for distributors, impacting the margins," FBN Securities analyst Robert Routh said. "Obviously, the people that sign up for the minimum, the margin is going to be different than those that sign up for every single channel and every single tier."

Core pay TV subscribers are continuing to shrink across the board. According to MoffettNathanson, the traditional pay TV industry (cable, satellite and telco TV providers) lost about 1.71 million subscribers in Q1, slightly better than

Altice USA CEO Dexter Goei told an industry conference that operators should focus on subs who buy profitable top-tier packages.

the 1.75 million lost in Q1 2020.

At the J.P. Morgan virtual Technology, Media & Communications conference on May 25, Altice USA CEO Dexter Goei articulated what a lot of operators have been thinking for a long time: If consumers are moving to streaming anyway, embrace the shift and focus on delivering better broadband and participate in the streaming relationship, either via partnerships that allow easier access to streaming apps or helping content providers market, sell or bundle their streaming apps with other products.

"Larger players with a full package of offerings on the direct-to-consumer side are good for our business because it focuses our customers on instead of six, seven or eight different choices, on something a lot smaller that in many respects replaces a video consumer that is less and less valuable to us," Goei said. "And it allows us to focus primarily on our broadband product, allows us to be a partner for content on a direct-to-consumer basis as opposed to a partner on a linear basis, and I think will dramatically improve the economic trends of our business from a cash-flow standpoint."

In the meantime, Goei said, operators should focus on profitable video customers — those who buy top-tier premium packages — and place less emphasis on video subscribers who change providers every few years based on price.

"Those are the ones that are shifting toward the direct-to-consumer offerings and that's good for us," Goei said. "It's beneficial to our economics, it makes our priorities very clear in terms of where we focus our capital allocation and our efforts."

"People getting larger on the consolidation front in the media space is good because it will allow our consumers to focus on those



[types] of offerings and allows them the alternative outside the fat bundle model for cable, because that business model historically is unsustainable," he said. "We are continuing to get skinnier and skinnier economics on the video, which also takes a large part of our capital allocation and efforts internally to focus on, and that's something we're seeing a shift in, which is good for our business."

Video profit margins have eroded in the past decade as consumers have increasingly cut the cord and prices for programming have risen steadily. At the same time, operators are increasingly embracing direct-to-consumer packages as a means to provide broadband customers with access to programming without having to deal with the hassles of actual carriage.

Goei pointed out the irony inherent in the streaming video revolution's potential to boost traditional linear TV profitability. But the idea that direct-to-consumer offerings could play into the prevailing wisdom that distributors should place less emphasis on middle-of-the-road video customers has been around for a while.

More Nets, More Fees

Most analysts agree that the initial impact of the WarnerMedia-Discovery union will be on the traditional linear business. With more networks — the combined company will control about 30 channels, including TNT, TBS, CNN, Food Network, Discovery Channel and HGTV — the new Warner Bros. Discovery could push for much higher-affiliate fees as carriage renewal time approaches. MoffettNathanson media analyst Michael Nathanson has estimated that Discovery accounts for 16% of viewership but just 6% of affiliate revenue. WarnerMedia has fared better, at 12% of viewership and 14% of total fees, according to Nathanson, but together they could attract 29% of viewership and 20% of affiliate fees.

But the analyst also pointed out that Warner Bros. Discovery has a unique set of assets and the largest chunk of

MARGINAL VALUE

Cable One had the highest cash-flow margin in Q1 in the cable industry, despite having one of the lowest broadband penetrations. Other operators managed to pass the 40% threshold, but that was despite continued video declines.

	Q1 2021	Q1 2020
CABLE ONE	52.9%	49.1%
ALTICE USA	43.4%	42.1%
CHARTER	39.5%	37.4%
COMCAST *	43.2%	40.7%

* Cable only; SOURCE: Company reports, MoffettNathanson estimates

SINKING SUBS

After a brief respite during the height of the pandemic, cable TV subscriber losses ticked up slightly in Q1, according to MoffettNathanson.

Video Subscriber Losses (in thousands)

	Q1 2021	Q1 2020
CABLE	(852)	(657)
SATELLITE	(716)	(928)
TELCO	(148)	(168)
TOTAL	(1,716)	(1,753)

SOURCE: Company reports, MoffettNathanson estimates and analysis

GROWTH EROSION

Pay TV subscribers have fallen, and the (year-over-year) growth in overall affiliate and retransmission consent fees for networks and broadcasters hit bottom in Q1 2020.

	Q1 2017	Q1 2018	Q1 2019	Q1 2020	Q1 2021
AFFILIATE FEES	7%	5%	4%	1%	5%
RETRANS	27%	18%	22%	16%	16%
TOTAL	9%	7%	6%	4%	5%

SOURCE: Company reports and MoffettNathanson estimates and analysis

national viewing share in the industry. Other programmers aren't that lucky.

Overall, MoffettNathanson has estimated that increases in cable-network affiliate fees will slow from 18%

growth in 2020 to 10% in 2021, 9% in 2022 and 2023 and 8% in 2024 and 2025.

"There are pressures that are building up and down the value chain," Moffett wrote in a May 27 report on cord-cutting. "Media companies are being forced to respond to shortfalls in their legacy businesses and celebratory valuations of their new ones by shifting content to DTC platforms ever faster. Distributors face renewal negotiations with increasingly weaker networks."

That changing dynamic was not lost on Goei, who said streaming offerings will play a big role in every linear network carriage negotiation. He added that access to DTC offerings is part of every discussion, and particularly smaller programmers want relationships where distributors will help push the streaming product.

"That becomes one of the front and center discussions in every single one of our renewals," Goei said. "Either because it's something we want to do or something they want to do or it's collectively something we both want to do. I think that's going to become the norm. It's part of the package, to the extent that the linear packages are less of a focus, then the direct-to-consumer package becomes more of a focus, and vice versa depending on what side of the aisle you're on."

Carriage Changes Coming

Goei added that he expects a big change in the next two to three years in the way distributors and content providers negotiate.

"It's not sustainable to continue to see price increases every year with viewership falling," Goei said. "Not only do subscriber counts fall on the video side, but overall viewership and ratings of the content providers fall as well, at least from a linear standpoint. They may be seeing and catching those types of viewerships on the direct-to-consumer offerings they have, but in terms of linear TV watching, that continues to be effective. You can't fight the trend. You have to accept it and figure out how to adapt from a business model standpoint." ●

People

Notable executives on the move



A+E NETWORKS

Helen Jurado was promoted to VP, international content sales, Latin America and U.S. Hispanic at A+E Networks International. She had been senior director, overseeing A+E's off-network sales to cable entities and new media platforms.



ALLEN MEDIA GROUP

John Buckholtz has joined Allen Media Group as VP of ad sales for AMG Global Syndication, responsible for Entertainment Studios TV series programming and content. He was VP of advertising sales at Warner Bros. Domestic Television.



CROWN MEDIA

Crown Media Family Networks has named **Toni Judkins** as senior VP, programming & development for Hallmark Channel and Hallmark Movies & Mysteries. She had headed her own production company, Moxy Media, since 2013.



CROWN MEDIA

Jessica Callahan was promoted to VP, programming & development at Hallmark Channel parent Crown Media Family Networks. Based in Los Angeles, she had been Crown Media's director of programming and development.



DISNEY

The Walt Disney Co. has named **Tara Duncan** to head Onyx Collective, a new content brand on Hulu that highlights shows from creators of color and under-represented voices. She will continue as president of cable network Freeform.



ESPN

Brian Lockhart was promoted to senior VP, ESPN Plus Original Content and ESPN Films, overseeing the 30 for 30 and ESPN Films franchises and ESPN Plus original series and studio shows. He had been VP of ESPN Plus Original Content.



ESPN

Mike Shiffman was advanced to senior VP, production, at ESPN. He will continue to oversee all production aspects of the network's event and studio coverage of the National Basketball Association, the WNBA and men's and women's college basketball.



FOURTHWALL

Paul Haddad was named executive chairman of the board of media and advertising analytics firm FourthWall Media. The media analytics veteran has worked with such companies as Altice, A4 Media, Cablevision Systems and Nortel Networks.



NEXSTAR

Nexstar Media Group has named **Andrew Alford** as president of its Nexstar Broadcasting division, responsible for overseeing its 198 owned-and-operated stations. He had been senior VP, regional manager for the station group.



NEXSTAR

Nexstar Media Group has named **Jim Rose** VP and general manager of its San Francisco operations, including independent station KRON. He comes from Tegna-owned KING 5 Media Group in Seattle, where he had been president and GM.



NEWSNATION

Michael Corn has joined Nexstar Media Group-owned network NewsNation as president of news. He is a former senior executive producer at ABC News, most recently in charge of *Good Morning America* and prior to that, *World News Tonight*.



TEGNA

Tegna has tapped **Julie Eisenman** as president and general manager of ABC affiliate WNEP in Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. She comes from WLTX Columbia, South Carolina, where she was news director and content manager for Verify.



NICKELODEON

Liz Paulson was named senior VP, talent and casting, Nickelodeon Kids & Family. Formerly responsible for overseeing animation casting and talent development, she will now oversee all live-action casting and talent under a consolidation.



TUBULAR

Social media measurement firm Tubular Labs has named **Stephen DiMarco** as chief strategy officer, tasked with broadening the company's product offering beyond social media and into the OTT sector. He had been chief digital officer at Kantar.



TEAM WHISTLE

Matt Koenig has joined Team Whistle in New York as VP, programming and monetization at WhistleTV. He comes from Jukin Media, where he was director of programming/streaming TV for the company's library of streaming video channels.



WARNERMEDIA

WarnerMedia Studios and Networks Group has named **Suzanna Makkos** as executive VP of original comedy and adult animation at Adult Swim and HBO Max. Makkos, who had been in that role at HBO Max, will now lead a combined team serving both brands.



TEAM WHISTLE

Stacey Richman was named VP of communications at Team Whistle. She comes from Group Nine Media, where she most recently was director of consumer communications, responsible for The Dodo, Thrillist, NowThis, POPSUGAR and Seeker brands.



VIDEOAMP

VideoAmp in Los Angeles has added **Paul Ross** as chief financial officer and a member of the advertising technology firm's board of directors. Ross comes from The Trade Desk, where he served as CFO during the company's initial public offering.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Other industry execs making moves

The American Association of Advertising Agencies (The 4A's) added several members to its executive team: **Ashwini Karandikar** as executive VP, media, tech and data; **Mollie Rosen** as executive VP, strategy, insight and innovation; **Greg Walker** as executive VP, member engagement and development— independent agencies and retention; and **Brian Nienhaus** as executive VP, member engagement and development—holding companies and growth. ... Ampersand added **Patty Keenan** as chief people officer. She most recently worked at insurer AXA. ... Cox Enterprises has named **Scott LeTourneau** as VP of corporate development. He comes from Cox Communications, where he has led M&A efforts as a VP since 2016. **Jim Riley** has joined Stingray Group as president of U.S. operations. He comes from Bitmax, where he led global product strategy, sales and marketing.

Ad Meter

Who's spending what where

PROMO MOJO

Our exclusive weekly ranking of the programming that networks are promoting most heavily (May 24-30)



America's Got Talent, NBC

TV Ad Impressions: **312,560,529**
 Total TV ad impressions within all U.S. households, including national linear (live and time-shifted), VOD plus OTT and local

Est. Media Value: **\$1,934,780**
 Estimated media value of in-network promos

On the strength of 312.6 million TV ad impressions, NBC's promo for the summer return of America's Got Talent takes first place. Two other competitions of sorts also make the cut: Fox's Lego Masters in third place and the 2021 CMT Music Awards in fourth. Rounding out the ranking are promos for two personality-driven shows: HGTV's Home Town Takeover, led by husband-and-wife renovation team Ben and Erin Napier, and Nat Geo's Gordon Ramsay: Uncharted, starring the celebrity chef/adventurer.


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


TOP 5 PROMOTIONS


- America's Got Talent, NBC**
 TV Ad Impressions **312,560,529**
 Est. Media Value **\$1,934,780**
- Home Town Takeover, HGTV**
 TV Ad Impressions **242,887,209**
 Est. Media Value **\$1,120,660**
- Lego Masters, Fox**
 TV Ad Impressions **240,676,028**
 Est. Media Value **\$462,134**
- 2021 CMT Music Awards, CMT**
 TV Ad Impressions **221,018,850**
 Est. Media Value **\$1,179,558**
- Gordon Ramsay: Uncharted, National Geographic**
 TV Ad Impressions **184,616,127**
 Est. Media Value **\$511,577**

BIG SPENDERS


Brands ranked by the greatest increase in TV spend (May 24-30)

1		Modelo
Spend Increase:	97%	
Est. TV Spend:	\$2.5M	
Spend Within Industry:	16%	
Top Network:	TNT	

2		Samsung Mobile
Spend Increase:	92%	
Est. TV Spend:	\$4.2M	
Spend Within Industry:	46%	
Top Network:	NBC	


3		Disney Plus
Spend Increase:	82%	
Est. TV Spend:	\$2.0M	
Spend Within Industry:	19%	
Top Network:	NBC	


4		NBA
Spend Increase:	70%	
Est. TV Spend:	\$1.7M	
Spend Within Industry:	33%	
Top Network:	Fox	


5		McDonald's
Spend Increase:	69%	
Est. TV Spend:	\$2.7M	
Spend Within Industry:	10%	
Top Network:	NBC	

MOST-SEEN TV ADS


Brands ranked by TV ad impressions (May 24-30)

1		GEICO
TV Ad Impressions:	1.29B	
Est. TV Spend:	\$10.7M	
Interruption Rate:	2.29%	
Top Show:	NBA	

2		Domino's
TV Ad Impressions:	1.21B	
Est. TV Spend:	\$6.1M	
Interruption Rate:	1.53%	
Top Show:	NBA	

3		Liberty Mutual
TV Ad Impressions:	1.18B	
Est. TV Spend:	\$6.7M	
Interruption Rate:	1.79%	
Top Show:	NBA	

4		Amazon
TV Ad Impressions:	984.8M	
Est. TV Spend:	\$8.1M	
Interruption Rate:	2.48%	
Top Show:	NBA	

5		Progressive
TV Ad Impressions:	960.1M	
Est. TV Spend:	\$7.9M	
Interruption Rate:	2.12%	
Top Show:	NBA	

B+C'S MOST VIEWED

Top stories on broadcastingcable.com, May 11-June 2

1. Fox Nation Offers Military Free One-Year Subscriptions
2. Juan Williams Bows Out of Fox News's 'The Five'
3. 'Jeopardy!' Guest Hosts' Ratings: Bill Whitaker Steady in Second Week
4. 'Jeopardy!' EP Mike Richards: Guest Hosts Were Part of Fans' Grieving Process
5. 'Who Is the Next 'Jeopardy!' Host?' The Answer Awaits

To read these stories, visit broadcastingcable.com.

NEARLY 10% OF U.S. BROADBAND SUBS NOW HAVE 1-GIG OR HIGHER SPEEDS

THE PERCENTAGE OF U.S. broadband subscribers who are provisioned for download speeds of 1 Gigabit per second reached 9.8% in the first quarter.

The market-share figure represents a 261% year-over-year increase — as of the first quarter of 2020,

only 3.8% of broadband customers had 1-Gig service, according to OpenVault, a Hoboken, N.J. provider of software, service and data solutions to high-speed internet providers.

U.S. broadband providers have spent billions of dollars on upgrades over the last decade to DOCSIS 3.1 and fiber-to-the-home standards, all aimed at providing download speeds in excess of 940 Mbps.

OpenVault's latest report also noted that slightly more than 80% of U.S. broadband customers are provisioned for download speeds of 100 Megabits per second or higher.

Notably, OpenVault found that broadband usage continues to moderate following a pandemic year featuring share increases.

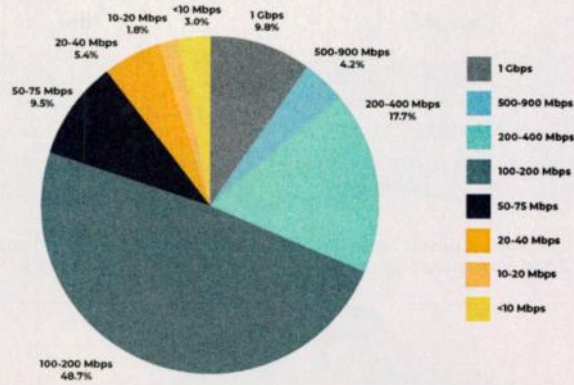
Monthly weighted average usage was 461.7 gigabytes in the first quarter of 2021, up nearly 15% from 402.5 GB in Q1 of 2020, but down 4.3% from 482.6 in the second quarter of last year.

Power users, defined as customers who use more than 1 terabyte of data per month, dropped 12% to 12.4% of the market. And "extreme power users" — those who chew up more than 2 TB — dropped 14% to 1.8% of broadband users. — Daniel Frankel

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

NEXT TV

Provisioned Broadband Speeds - First Quarter 2021



SOURCE: OVBI Broadband Insights Report 1Q21

STICKIEST SHOWS *Top 10 cable programs ranked by viewer engagement**



Stickiness Rank	Ratings Rank	Telecast (Week Ending May 23)	Network	Stickiness Index*
1	1	2021 NBA Playoffs: Warriors at Lakers	ESPN	144
2	36	90 Day Fiancé: Happily Ever After?	TLC	143
3	188	Morning Show Mysteries: Murder Ever After	Hallmark Movies & Mysteries	137
4	866	La Rosa de Guadalupe	Galavisión	133
5	77	WWE Monday Night Raw	USA Network	130
6	434	Tracking a Killer	LMN	130
7	728	Fatal Attraction	TV One	128
8	380	Fear the Walking Dead	AMC	128
9	64	Moonlight in Vermont	Hallmark Movies & Mysteries	126
10	57	Movie, USA	USA Network	125



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.)

STICKIEST SHOWS Top 10 broadcast programs ranked by viewer engagement*

Stickiness Rank	Ratings Rank	Telecast (Week Ending May 23)	Network	Stickiness Index*
1	144	<i>Enamorándonos</i>	UniMas	152
2	75	<i>¿Te Acuerdas De Mi?</i>	Univision	145
3	88	<i>La Hija Del Embajador</i>	Univision	144
4	104	<i>Buscando a Frida</i>	Telemundo	143
5	7	<i>FBI</i>	CBS	139
6	2	<i>NCIS</i>	CBS	138
7	9	<i>Chicago Fire</i>	NBC	137
8	85	<i>Diseñando Tu Amor</i>	Univision	136
9	3	<i>The Voice</i>	NBC	136
10	31	<i>9-1-1: Lone Star</i>	Fox	135

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 MAY 24

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>Lucifer</i>	Netflix	Share of binges: 5.20%
2	<i>Grey's Anatomy</i>	Netflix/Hulu	Share of binges: 1.10%
3	<i>Modern Family</i>	Peacock/Hulu	Share of binges: 1.04%
4	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	Hulu	Share of binges: 0.98%
5	<i>Love, Death & Robots</i>	Netflix	Share of binges: 0.90%
6	<i>Criminal Minds</i>	Netflix/Hulu	Share of binges: 0.89%
7	<i>One Piece</i>	Netflix/Hulu	Share of binges: 0.81%
8	<i>Mare of Easttown</i>	HBO Max	Share of binges: 0.77%
9	<i>Schitt's Creek</i>	Netflix/Prime Video	Share of binges: 0.72%
10	<i>Law & Order: Special Victims Unit</i>	Peacock/Hulu	Share of binges: 0.69%

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



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*, May 11-June 2

1. Fox Nation Offers Military Free One-Year Subscriptions
2. Juan Williams Bows Out of Fox News's 'The Five'
3. Baltimore Official Marilyn Mosby Files FCC Complaint Against WBFF-TV
4. Sinclair CEO Chris Ripley Says Bally Sports DTC Offering Will Include Full Slate of Games
5. Comcast Charter Eye Wireless-Broadband Double Play

To read these stories, go to multichannel.com.



Most-Watched Shows on TV in May



Of all the live, linear minutes watched by VIZIO smart TVs in May, 2.35% of the time was spent watching NBA Basketball. See which other shows captured the most watch-time* in the graphic below.



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



People Active Online* at Home During the Work Day

1/29/2020-5/28/2021 | 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



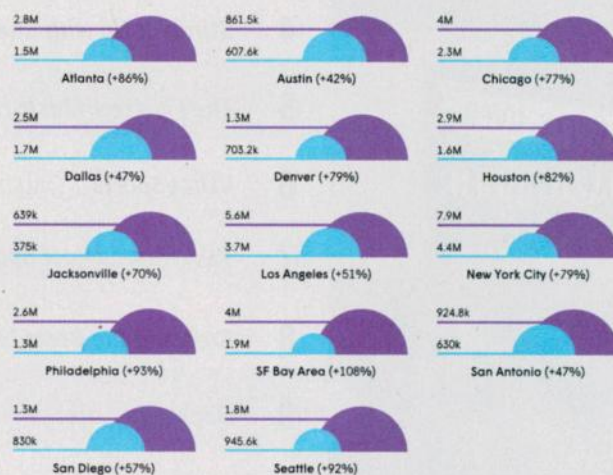
22.6 Million

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

39.1 Million

are active online* during the work day now

CITY BY CITY BREAKDOWN



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

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

Rank	Station	Location	Network	What news event drove tune-in?
1	KTSF *	San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose	Lincoln Broadcasting	<p>STATE OF EMERGENCY: FLOODING IN LOUISIANA</p> <p>FLOOD RISK THROUGH 7 AM THURSDAY</p> <p>* Most out-of-market viewers</p>
2	WFMZ	Philadelphia	Maranatha Broadcasting	
3	WWTW	Traverse City, Michigan	Heritage Broadcasting	
4	WSFA	Montgomery-Selma, Alabama	Gray Television	
5	WVUE	New Orleans	Gray Television	
6	WKYT	Lexington, Kentucky	Gray Television	
7	KTUU	Anchorage, Alaska	Gray Television	
8	WRDW	Augusta-Aiken, Georgia	Gray Television	
9	KIEM	Eureka, California	Terrier Media	
10	KGMB	Honolulu	Gray Television	

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

	1 <i>Business First AM</i> Daily news series
	2 <i>food.curated.</i> Documentary series
	3 <i>Martin Yan's Gourmet Kitchen</i> Culinary program
	4 <i>Stirrin' It Up with Chef John Folse</i> Culinary program
	5 <i>The Fly-Over Music Hour</i> On-demand local music
	6 <i>VUit eSports</i> Original on-demand eSports
	7 <i>VUit High School Sports Replays</i> On-demand local sports
	8 <i>Crossing the Great Lakes</i> Documentary series
	9 <i>Backlash</i> VUit original short film
	10 <i>Detroit Muscle</i> Automotive enthusiast program

VUIT'S MOST POPULAR CHANNELS

Most streamed channels on the VUit app for May 2021

1. ACCDN Confidential
2. NYC Live Street Cam
3. ExhaleTV
4. VUit eSports
5. Investigate TV

To view these channels, go to VUit.com

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



By Matt Cuson, Minerva Networks
@MinervaNetworks

Squabble Shines a Light On Dynamic Ad Insertion

YouTube-Roku dust-up points to power of personalization

The negotiations around whether YouTube will remain on the Roku platform offer a great lesson. Both sides are posturing and blaming the other for the breakdown in decision-making. Roku has spent a lot of time and money building a platform that boasts more than 53 million subscribers.

YouTube is a powerhouse that has both the eyeballs and powerful Google search algorithms to back up the popular service.

The real news for TV service providers is how this spat highlights the growing popularity of free and freemium models. It also points to the value of personalized ads and their growing importance in the world of TV advertising. These ads are specifically tailored for an individual and based on what we know about their viewing habits. YouTube has always used this model to drive higher CPMs. Roku also started off this way and has never been tied to the one-to-many broadcast advertising model. Traditional TV will need to figure this out or risk being skewered by viewers looking for more relevance in the 20 minutes of ads they're forced to watch during an hour of their favorite shows.

I could rattle off a ton of stats that point to the power of personalization but to save time and word count, here are just two. Accenture reports that 83% of consumers are willing to share their data

to create a more personalized experience. And 90% of consumers are willing to share personal behavioral data for a cheaper and easier experience, according to SmarterHQ. The net here is that while we may not love the thought of ads invading our world, personalization can make them less irritating — and for some, dare I say, enjoyable.

As the roughly \$70 billion per year in U.S. broadcast ad spending moves to streaming and gets spread out over more and more content sources, new distribution and revenue models are needed. Digital ad markets don't have the limitations of traditional broadcast advertising, where programs act as proxies for targeted demographic segments. Now the focus is on the user and ads are focused on views.

Any time any person views any content on any device anywhere, it creates a personalized ad opportunity. Even niche content can generate meaningful revenue,

Matt Cuson is VP of marketing and product at Minerva Networks



Any time any person views any content on any device anywhere, it creates a personalized ad opportunity.

since advertisers can target potential buyers directly rather than using content audience type as a surrogate. Dynamic ad insertion (DAI) brings advertisers, content owners, operators and consumers together in a win-win-win-win group hug.

Offsetting Program Costs

It's not just free or freemium services that benefit. YouTube TV started at a cost of \$35 per month. They hiked it to \$40 with the addition of the Turner networks. Then it went up to \$50 and most recently, \$65. The service keeps adding more and more content while being pressured to keep its subscription rates low. Even Google, the inventor of digital advertising business models, can't ignore the rising cost of content. The easiest way to offset cost is to get a higher price per impression, and you do that through personalization.

Broadband and mobile service providers see video as a way to make their service stickier and drive revenue. By moving to a hosted managed cloud service, they eliminate the upfront investment cost and pay only for subscribers they sign up. This investment model sets up nicely for an ad subsidized free or freemium video service. Even if free means it isn't first-tier premium content, people will still watch tier two entertainment. And providers can make money using dynamic ad insertion while gaining access to free, ad-supported content. Once a foothold is established with a free service, subscribers can then upgrade to premium packages.

As Roku and Google continue to argue over content availability and revenue splits, it behooves operators to heed the wisdom of famous movie lines like "follow the money." Some OTT apps have shown they can win with a subscription-only model, but let's not ignore the ad revenue potential of secondary content. While it may have a narrow niche appeal for some, there is a lot to choose from and the content owners are willing to give it away for a share of ad revenue.

Free and freemium content has become a viable and proven business model. It's time for operators to embrace the future. ●

Jamie Hector

Amazon Prime Video's 'Bosch'

Actor's character, L.A. cop 'J. Edgar,' starts final season at a crossroads

With seven years, seven seasons and 68 episodes in the can, the seminal

Amazon Prime Video original series *Bosch* will wind down this summer. Hardboiled titular character Harry Bosch will end his highly productive, albeit somewhat polarizing, run as an LAPD Hollywood Division homicide detective, moving on to become a Mr. Gadget for power attorney Honey Chandler.

This isn't a spoiler. We already know that star Titus Welliver and his character—inspired by the novels of Michael Connelly, living by his own rules, and answering only to the call of justice from high atop Laurel Canyon in his swanky, panoramically situated, smooth-jazz-imbued bachelor pad—is being spun off into an as-yet-untitled spinoff on Amazon's ad-supported IMDb TV platform. *Bosch* bolting the LAPD was in the announcement.

As Amazon gets set to upload the final eight episodes of *Bosch* on June 25, what we don't know is what happens to Bosch's longtime loyal partner, the stylishly able Jerry Edgar, played by actor Jamie Hector.

When we last saw J. Edgar, as he's most often called in the cubicles of the soon-to-shutter Hollywood Division, he was uncharacteristically taking justice into his own hands, offing Haitian drug kingpin Jacques Avril (Trevé Etienne) in a shoot that internal affairs would definitely deem less than "good," had Detective Edgar not—also uncharacteristically—lied about the details.

Next TV managing editor Daniel Frankel caught up with Hector to ask him what the heck is going on with the

usually so steady J. Edgar. And what's he gonna do now?

It was definitely a shock the way Detective Edgar took down Avril at the end of Season 6. What got into him? What got into Jerry was the need for justice. Avril was about to commit another murder, and he had the protection of the government to do it. It was also personal—he killed Jerry's uncle. It was that deep pain in Jerry's gut that the world was going to lose with Avril in it because of the atrocities he committed in Haiti, the murders in the U.S. and the murders he would commit in the future, still under the protection of the government.

Your character on *Bosch* is definitely guided by a basic sense of humanity, which is very different from the more pathological Marlo Stanfield (of *The Wire*), a role you're also really well-known for. Can you describe the key differences in approach? The key difference in my approach was the sum total of their lives at the point in which we met them. Not just the moments before or the day before—it was their lifetime before that led up to the moment their stories began. They were created by their environments: Marlo saw his mother sleeping with a different man every night, and he slept on the floor. Jerry slept in his own bed, and he had the protection of his family who sang "Happy Birthday" to him and made sure he had everything he needed. Marlo's life was built on lack and survival—he's going to get what he needs by any means necessary—if that means respect, money, whatever he needs at that time, so be it. Jerry's was built on access, protection and service.

BONUS FIVE

What shows are you binge-watching right now? *Bosch*, *Queen of the South*, *Godfather of Harlem*

Where did you ride out the pandemic? L.A.? Back in New York? In New York and in L.A. when working on *Bosch*.

How do L.A. cops like J. Edgar eat at so many delicious-looking taco stands and burrito places and stay in such great shape? It's called jogging, LOL—and small portions.

What technology that you use every day do you like the best (hardware or software)? My Echo.

What's the last book you read? *We Own This City* by Justin Fenton.

How influenced is your performance by the Michael Connelly books? Obviously, those novels must impact the character development to an extent. But there seems to be a lot of you in J. Edgar. In Season 1, I read the books that the season was based on, and I felt as if I was playing the role with the knowledge of what was going to happen next. In life, it doesn't work like that, so after Season 1, I stopped reading the books beforehand, especially since the scripts were not written exactly like the books. When that would happen, it would throw me off when what the book and scripts said were different. It would be funny sometimes—for example, I am a runner, so when we would do a scene where a little running got Jerry winded, now that was difficult for me.

How challenging was shooting Season 7 of *Bosch* in the middle of a pandemic? It was very challenging because pre-pandemic, the set of *Bosch* was a very comfortable, friendly set, where everyone was close, from the actors to the crew to the producers. Everyone spoke every day, and we ate together. So after six seasons of this comfort, when COVID-19 hit and we had to distance ourselves, that was challenging.

Any chance Jerry Edgar collides with Harry Bosch working a case for Honey Chandler in the IMDb TV spinoff? You never know. I am excited to know that the work we did together was able to lead to a spinoff, and I'm happy about that whether I make an appearance in it or not. ●



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New Year, New Name, New Look!

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