

# Broadcasting Multichannel News + Cable

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NYC TV WEEK  
PREVIEW EDITION

## SYNDICATION'S NEW PLAYBOOK

In a climate of economic challenge, stations are seeking out shows that are live and local — and have multiple distribution partners, like this fall's 'Good Morning Football: Overtime'

WOMEN IN THE  
GAME THRIVE IN  
A BANNER YEAR



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FUTURE

Connectors  
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# Diversity Week Will Bring Industry's DEI Report Card

AIM/PAR study results to be revealed during week of inclusion-related industry gatherings



By R. Thomas Umstead  
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The unveiling of the 2024 AIM/PAR Workplace Diversity Study highlights the annual Diversity Week of gatherings recognizing diversity and inclusion efforts within the

media and entertainment industries.

The week of events begins October 21 with the WICT Network Leadership Conference, followed by the October 22 NAMIC Conference and the October 23 Kaitz Dinner, now under the auspices of the NCTA Educational Foundation (formerly the Walter Kaitz Foundation).

WICT and NAMIC will once again team to offer the latest AIM/PAR Workplace Survey, a biennial report on the current state of ethnic and gender diversity within the media and entertainment industry. Industry executives hope the new survey will surpass the results from the 2022 report, which showed major gains for women in the workforce but a decline in the share of people of color employed compared to 2019. (The 2022 survey was delayed a year due to the pandemic.)

"It's going to be fascinating to see how the industry fared in terms of women and people of color," WICT Network president and CEO

Maria E. Brennan said. "Depending on what kind of company you keep there's either a stronger commitment than ever to diversity, or one that looks at DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) as some sort of entitlement program where it personifies the complete misunderstanding of what diversity and inclusion means for everyone across the board."



Due, CNN Worldwide executive VP, integrity and inclusion; and Sandy Howe, ATX Networks board director. The organization will also honor three Women to Watch during the luncheon: Charter Communications head of operations, sales and marketing Julie Unruh; AMC Networks executive VP, linear and streaming products Courtney Thomasma; and Amazon Web Services Global director of solutions architecture for media & entertainment, games and sports Steph Lone.

MSNBC president Rashida Jones is honorary chair of the NAMIC Conference, set for October 22-23. "We are honored to have Rashida Jones as this year's honorary chair," Washington said. "Her leadership and vision are transforming the media landscape, setting new standards for excellence and inclusion."

Essence Ventures CEO Caroline Wanga will keynote NAMIC's 38th annual conference. Washington said the conference's theme, "Diverse Voices! Defining the Future ...," will focus not only on empowering diverse voices not only within the industry, but exploring potential partnerships with tangential companies.

"This year's conference embodies a pivotal moment of change and progress as we navigate and shape the future of our industry together," Washington added.

"Do Good. Be Better. Impact Tomorrow." is the theme for the October 23 Kaitz Dinner

diversity fundraising event. The dinner is the first since the Walter Kaitz Foundation was fully integrated into the NCTA Education Foundation in May. The NCTA Education Foundation is dedicated to leveraging the industry's positive impact on communities, NCTA said.

The NCTA Education Foundation will continue the former Kaitz Foundation's grant-making programs and support for legacy industry organizations and efforts, according to NCTA.

The Kaitz Dinner will honor two ChangeMakers "who have made a significant impact and resonance around diversity and inclusion in our industry over the last year," said the organization. Comcast NBCUniversal is the Ambassador Sponsor, with Charter Communications the Champion Sponsor.

Last year's 40th anniversary Kaitz fundraising dinner raised more than \$1.1 million toward the media and connectivity industry's DEI efforts. ●

NAMIC president Shuanise Washington also hopes this year's survey will show an improvement. "Those companies who are absolutely committed to diversity see an ROI (return on investment) in terms of better outcomes and better business results, as well as positive work environments and work cultures in those companies," she said. "Those efforts hopefully will continue to grow despite the tangential conversations that will be taking place to some degree."

## WICT, NAMIC Set To Gather

The two-day WICT Network Leadership Conference & Touchstones Luncheon kicks off Diversity Week October 21 under the theme "Fueling Your Power and Purpose," and will focus on the leadership qualities and the importance of fostering an inclusive workforce culture.

The Touchstones Luncheon will honor its 2024 Women of the Year winners Amy Blair, Liberty Global chief people officer; Johnita



Maria E. Brennan



Shuanise Washington

# THE WATCHMAN

Content director Michael Malone's look at the programming scene



By Michael Malone  
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## Fox's 'Rescue: HI-Surf' Features Sand, Salt, Saves

*Rescue: HI-Surf*, about the lifeguard life on Hawaii's North Shore, premieres on Fox September 22. The drama comes from Matt Kester, executive producer and co-showrunner. He grew up in Hawaii, surfed a lot and saw how much more lifeguards do than sit and soak up sun.

"We see lifeguards a little differently there, a little bit like a guardian angel," he said.

The show is shot entirely in Hawaii. Before shooting began, cast members were informed they'd be in for a real workout. "We were very upfront with everyone we considered, that this was going to be a physical job," Kester said. "They knew they would be in for an immersive experience."

Training began a couple of weeks before production and the cast "became very capable, competent water people," Kester said.

The cast includes Robbie Magasiva, Arielle Kebbel and Adam Demos.

Kester spent "a ton of time" observing and chatting with lifeguards to get the characters right. "You realize as you listen to them, the incredible experience they have with rescues," he said. "They essentially have Ph.D.s in the ocean."

John Wells is an executive producer. Kester



*Rescue: HI-Surf*



*Matlock*

and Wells worked together on *Animal Kingdom*.

What about *Rescue* stands out? "It's entertaining and fun and beautiful to look at, and it's about people doing good things, trying to save people," Kester said. "There's a positive message behind it. I'm done with the antihero."

## Kathy Bates as Madeline 'Matty' Matlock in CBS Legal Drama

*Matlock*, a rethink of the Andy Griffith legal drama from days of yore, starts on CBS with a sneak peek September 22. Kathy Bates portrays Madeline "Matty" Matlock.

Executive producer/showrunner Jennie Snyder Urman had Bates in mind for the title role from the start. She was sent Snyder Urman's script, and they met. Bates loved the script, said don't change a word of it, and adored the character as well.

"She gave me a huge gift," said Snyder Urman.

Bates then pulled up her laptop and the two got to work.

Snyder Urman described the show as a series with "layers."

"It's not solely a procedural," she said. "There's a big overarching mystery. There's a lot of comedy and drama and tone changes and Kathy bridges them all. She can make you cry one moment and laugh the next moment."

The producers and writers "are very conscious of doing a different show," Snyder Urman said, than the one that debuted in 1986. What plays out in the courtroom will reflect what one sees in real-life news. "All of our cases deal with things we are grappling with," she said. "It definitely has current moments in its heart." ●

## WATCH THIS ...



*Three Women*

*Three Women* starts on Starz September 13. Offering "a nuanced portrait of female desire through the compelling, raw, and honest stories of three women," according to the network, it has Shailene Woodley, Betty Gilpin and DeWanda Wise in the cast. 📺 *High Potential* starts on ABC September 17. It follows a single mom with a knack for solving crimes, who is paired up with a seasoned



*The Old Man*

detective. Kaitlin Olson plays the mom and Daniel Sunjata the detective. Also on September 17, *The Old Man* kicks off season two on FX. Jeff Bridges plays the former CIA agent and John Lithgow the former FBI assistant director. 📺 CBS is holding its fall premieres until October, excluding *Survivor*, which starts season 47 September 18. Jeff Probst, of course, hosts. 📺 And *Brilliant Minds* debuts on NBC September 23. Inspired by the life of physician Oliver Sacks, the series follows a larger-than-life neurologist played by Zachary Quinto.



*Brilliant Minds*

# SYNDICATION ENTERS A NEW ERA WITH FULL SLATE OF MULTIPLATFORM SHOWS

Programs that make it to air these days almost always have more than one financing stream



By Paige Albinia  
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Mounting shows in first-run syndication has become financially daunting as production costs have risen and ratings have plummeted. As a result, TV stations and producers are finding innovative ways to get offerings on the air — acquiring shows off streaming services, allowing them to air concurrently on other platforms, expanding existing programs and creating local offerings that can also run regionally. While local linear television is an increasingly challenged business, broadcasters are devising

interesting new solutions to solve their programming problems.

“It’s really hard to pay for things these days,” Fox Television Stations executive VP Frank Cicha said. “People are figuring out how to do some interesting stuff to pay for new programming. That’s the upside and the optimism of it all.”

Dual- (or more) stream financing is “necessary now,” Stacy Rader, senior VP, first-run development and brand extensions at CBS Media Ventures (CMV), said. “Single-source financing is hard to pull off these days, particularly for new product.”

Fox this fall will launch six programs: *Good Morning Football: Overtime* from NFL Network and Sony Pictures Television; *Flip Side* from CBS Media Ventures and

***Good Morning Football: Overtime, an extension of NFL Network’s long-running morning show, has been sold to stations by Sony Pictures Television.***

Game Show Network; and two new true-crime shows: Warner Bros.’ *True Crime News* and Trifecta’s *Crime Expose With Nancy O’Dell*. Fox has its own limited-edition news program, *Battleground*, which is airing across its own group and on a few other stations. And Fox picked up an off-network run of *Suits* from NBCUniversal that will air weekly in primetime on its MyNet stations. Separately, Warner Bros. is debuting Chuck Lorre’s off-CBS *Bob Hearts Abishola* on stations across the country.

Fox has a big advantage over other station groups in clearing shows, with duopolies in the top three markets of New York, Los Angeles and Chicago and plenty of periods to fill. As a result, all roads lead through Fox.

## Fox Likes Live and Local

Fox has some specific priorities for its syndicated programs: ideally they are day-and-date — a mandate filled by shows like *GMFB: Overtime* and *True Crime News* — and it’s even better if they offer a live component. Fox also seeks shows that allow close integration with its owned TV stations. *True Crime News* plans to work with its local affiliates to showcase crime stories from their markets, for example. Fox already has sent its *Good Day LA* team from KTTV Los Angeles to Inglewood to shoot on the SoFi Stadium-based set of *GMFB: Overtime*.

Fox also is producing more shows that work regionally. For example, *The Jason Show* comes from Fox’s KMSP Minne-



apolis-St. Paul but airs regionally in 11 markets.

Lifestyle talk show *Portia* airs on Fox-owned stations in Atlanta, Orlando and San Francisco, as well as on Fox-owned streamer Fox Soul, which is programmed to connect with Black audiences, and on faith-based streamer Impact Network.

Fox this fall also is doing something completely different with *Battleground*, a news-oriented program that will cover politics in the country's swing states. In its final 60 days or so, the presidential election continues to be hard-fought, dramatic and too close to call. Fox aims to help viewers keep track of it all via *Battleground*, which is hosted by S.E. Cupp and features reporting from across Fox's station groups and from reporters from Gannett, McClatchy and the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*.

"It's really hyperlocal and it's all about the swing states," Stephen Brown, executive VP, programming and development, Fox First Run and Fox Television Stations, said. "We're in every single market in Michigan and Wisconsin. We're leaning into what we see on the ground and how that's affecting the race."

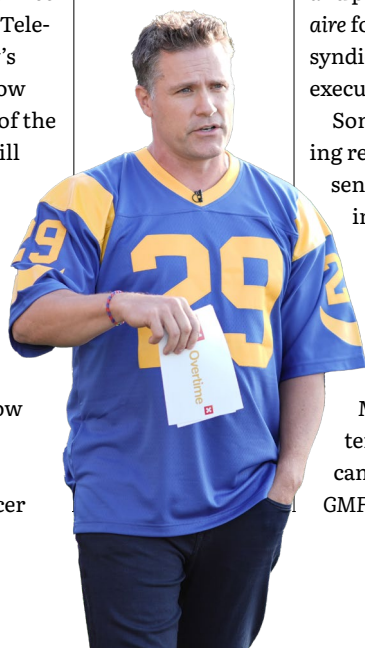
This fall's biggest swing, GMFB: *Overtime*, is a two-hour expansion of *Good Morning Football*, a two-hour sports talk panel that has aired on NFL Network since 2016 and has relocated to Los Angeles from New York. The expansion series will run on streaming service Roku and on TV stations, with Fox Television Stations serving as the show's broadcast launch group and the show cleared in 92% of the country. Half of the stations who are airing the show will be taking it live, Flory Bramnick, executive VP, distribution, Sony Pictures Television, said.

Stations also can air the show in two-hour blocks or split it into two separate hours to run at different times of day. GMFB: *Overtime* is a prime example of a show that's being produced under a more flexible economic model.

Even back when executive producer



**True-crime shows, including *iCrime With Elizabeth Vargas* (top) and *Crime Exposé With Nancy O'Dell*, are gaining more of a foothold this fall. Below, *Good Morning Football: Overtime* co-host Kyle Brandt.**



Michael Davies was pitching the show to the NFL, he knew that "the show needed to be more famous" than just one daily run on the NFL Network could make it.

"In an era of declining linear cable, we needed to be more distribution forward," Davies said. "I really believed we could make this show work and not just as an NFL show or a sports-talk show. This goes beyond sports."

Davies brought with him a lot of experience in syndication, having developed and produced *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire* for ABC in primetime and then in syndication from 2002-2019, and having executive produced *Jeopardy!* since 2021.

Sony and the NFL also had preexisting relationships with Roku, so it made sense to bring the streaming service in as well.

"Overall, as a business, we are always looking for ways to expand the reach of our content, whether that content is live games or studio content and shows," NFL Media VP, original content and entertainment Angela Ellis said. "This came up as an opportunity to get the GMFB brand out there in a way that

gives it a lot more exposure."

And TV stations are more than happy to share: "Roku Channel is chipping in in a big way for GMFB: *Overtime*," Cicha said. "To me, that needed to start happening about five years ago."

### True Crime Fits the Bill

Switching gears, *True Crime News*, hosted by Ana Garcia and produced by Warner Bros./Telepictures, will cover the day's top crime stories. It's been staffed up with assignment editors and producers who formerly worked for such news organizations as ABC, CBS, CNN, Vice and more.

"We are the only program that will be covering true-crime news as it happens," Albert Lewitinn, executive producer of *True Crime News*, said. The show is also executive-produced by *Extra*'s Jeremy Spiegel and Theresa Coffino. "We also have the ability to leverage all of the affiliates that are taking part in this. Fox, Scripps, Tegna, Hearst — they are all on board and it's great to see them being partners with us in this. It's a lot of back and forth between us and our affiliates — they're the eyes and ears."

That kind of collaboration appeals to stations looking to grab broader reach for their local news brands.

*True Crime News* is cleared in 98% of the country and in 204 markets. It already has a website, a YouTube channel and a video and audio podcast, hosted by Garcia, that have been up and running for years. The

website gets an average of 2.5 million viewers per month, while the YouTube channel has 5.45 million subscribers.

Also coming online this fall is *Crime Exposé* with Nancy O'Dell from Trifecta, Michael Eisner's Tornante and Scott Sternberg Productions, with Sternberg as executive producer. Sternberg, who also has a strong reputation for producing game shows, has been in the true-crime business for years. ID's *On the Case with Paula Zahn*, which Sternberg's company executive produces and also streams on Max, just got renewed for a 15th season.

While *True Crime News* will cover the true-crime news of the day, *Crime Exposé* will focus on one murder in each half-hour episode. All of the cases that make it to air will already be through the trial and conviction phase, so every story has a beginning, middle and end — a format that true-crime addicts can't seem to get enough of.

"No one has done a true-crime murder story every day in first run," Sternberg said. "But this makes sense because this audience just wants to consume as much of it as they can."

It's a bit of a homecoming for O'Dell, who is best known for her stints hosting *Access Hollywood* and *Entertainment Tonight*, but who worked as an on-air crime reporter in Charleston, South Carolina, earlier in her broadcast career.

*Crime Exposé With Nancy O'Dell* is cleared in just under 98% of the U.S. with 24 weeks of original programming.

Trifecta also has renewed *iCrime with Elizabeth Vargas* for a third season, and the two shows are expected to be paired in many markets. *iCrime* relies on clips submitted by users, and in season three, plans to use even more clips at a faster pace. Both *Crime Exposé* and *iCrime* are sold on an all-barter basis.

### 'Flip Side' Looks To Connect

Finally, CBS Media Ventures has partnered with Game Show Network to produce *Flip Side*, a half-hour game show starring Jaleel White, who audiences



know as Steve Urkel from '90s sitcom *Family Matters*.

White came to producers' attention after making several appearances on current syndicated game shows *Pictionary* and *25 Words or Less*.

"I feel like my place in the business is connecting with people," White said. "The celebrity thing is about how you make the viewer feel about themselves."

White also is charged with ensuring the show stays on track while also keeping it fun and fast-paced. He's been part of the show's development since it began in 2020, joining CBS's John Budkins, production company Keller/Noll and executive producer Ken Ross on Zoom calls once things really started picking up in the winter and spring of 2023.

"We liked Jaleel and wanted to find a vehicle for him," Budkins, senior VP, programming and scheduling, CBS TV Stations, said. "We built the show around him and his talent for working with people."

*Flip Side* premieres September 9 on CBS-owned stations — mostly duopoly stations in top markets — and September 16 on GSN. CBS stations get the first run with GSN getting a second run shortly thereafter.

"All of the platforms are

**Above: CBS Media Ventures partnered with Game Show Network to back *Flip Side*, a new game show hosted by Jaleel White. Below: Streaming success helped *Suits* find new life in broadcast syndication.**

completely different and social followers now are much savvier," Rader said. "I look at the social piece as a way to get people engaged in playing the game so they want to see more of it on the linear side."

With more series coming to syndication from other platforms, the line between first-run and off-network is getting increasingly blurred. One interesting entry this fall is *Suits*, a one-hour drama from Universal that originally aired on USA Network from 2011 to 2019, and starred Patrick J. Adams, Gabriel Macht and Meghan Markle, who went on to marry Prince Harry and become globally famous.

The show started running on Netflix in 2023 and shot to the top of the streaming charts. NBCUniversal Syndication Studios executive VP of syndication sales Sean O'Boyle saw the opportunity and took the show out to stations to run on an all-barter basis. MyNetworkTV, which airs one-hour off-net dramas in primetime, took NBCU up on its offer and will air *Suits* in a two-hour stack on Tuesday nights. It's also been sold to stations covering more than 93% of the country (not including MyNet) on a "flexible scheduling" basis, meaning that stations can schedule the show however they want, whether that's as a strip or once a week.

Another off-network show coming to syndication this fall is *Judy Justice*, which stars Judge Judy Sheindlin and originally aired on Amazon Freevee. *Judy Justice* is the only new court show coming to syndication this fall after several years where multiple court shows were offered.

Looking ahead, executives agree that first-run syndication will likely be financed by this type of creative dealmaking.

"Streaming and linear are complementary audiences and we are going where the viewers are," Brannick said. "Having multiple platforms and players involved means that the economics of the shows hold up." ●





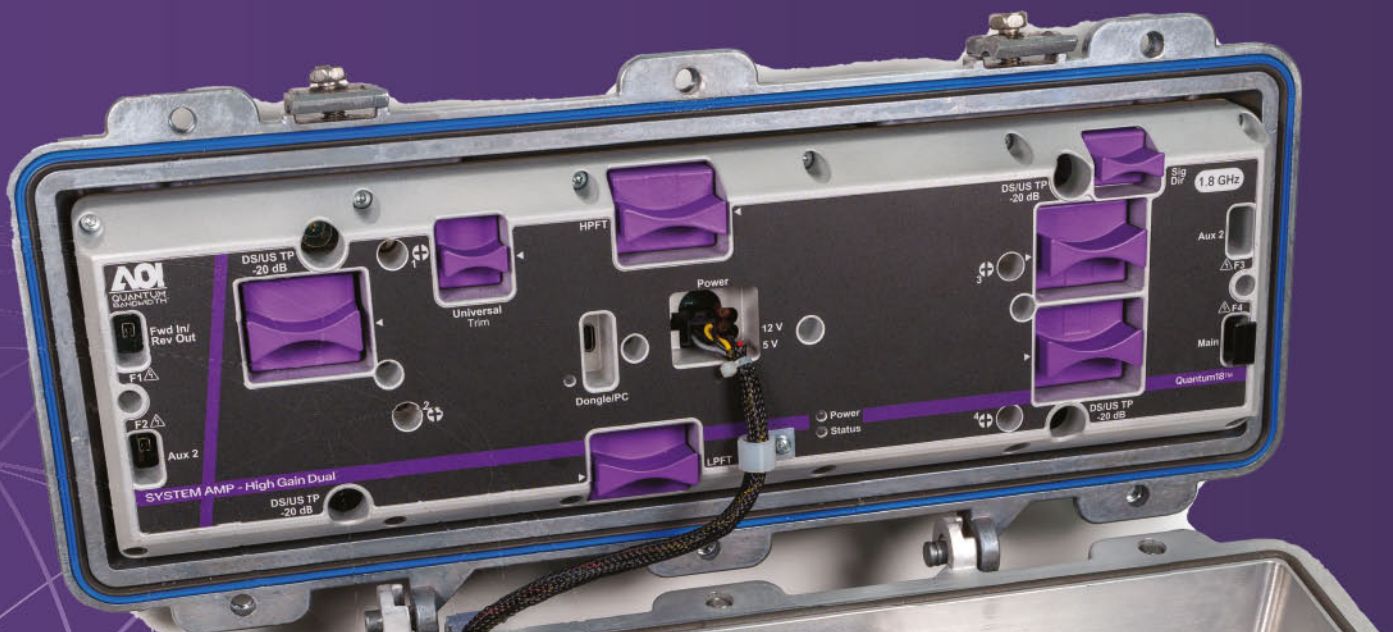
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WNBA rookie Caitlin Clark – whose college exploits were a huge boon for women's sports – works against Breanna Stewart of the U.S. Olympic women's basketball team during the 2024 WNBA All-Star Game.

# BOOM TIMES BRING MORE REPRESENTATION TO WOMEN IN SPORTS

This year's list of influential women hope 2024's surge will lead to true industry parity



By Stuart Miller  
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It's the year of Caitlin Clark and Angel Reese, of Simone Biles and Katie Ledecky — a year when T-shirts declaring “Everyone Watches Women's Sports” are seemingly everywhere.

This sudden shift in the sports landscape was actually years in the making. And while behind-the-scenes momentum behind the scenes has been far more gradual, industry leaders are hopeful this year of women in the game will help spark further change.

“There's so much momentum around women's sports right now and I'm a big believer that all ships rise together, so there's real opportunity here,” Women Leaders in Sports CEO Patti Phillips said. “We really want to leverage this momentum to create

change for good — we need women in the room where decisions are being made.”

Still, Phillips believes that while change is happening, it's the pace that is lagging. “It has been a slow go and there are a lot of things that aren't said publicly,” she said. “But if you heard honestly from women about their life working in sports, it's not good. While there are more men who are allies and who are becoming aware of unconscious bias, there's still a long way to go. The culture still is not where it should be.”

Mountain West Conference commissioner Gloria Nevarez, the first Hispanic commissioner in NCAA Division I history, agreed. “You see a lot more women in the pipeline but not at the top echelons,” Nevarez said. “I can't tell you how many times a job opens and the media riffs about a list of potential candidates but they don't even include a woman. In the job, softer skills — collaboration, building consensus, coming at issues with humility — are an asset, but we aren't getting in the interview pool

and when we do there are inherent historical biases. There's just a long way to go.”

Still, the younger generation is more optimistic. “I definitely have not faced as many challenges as my peers in the past,” said Jill Schwartz, marketing manager for FAST Studio Streaming Networks, which includes the fledgling Women's Sports Network.

Added Courtney Stockmal, who directs football and soccer games for Fox Sports, “In the 15 years I've been in the industry it has definitely changed.”

NFL Network senior director Sara Ries agreed. “Now there are so many jobs for women,” she said, which was not true when she graduated college in 2005.

And as they ascend the ladder, these younger women are mindful of reaching back. “As you grow in a company and have more of an influence and more of a voice, you can speak up,” NBC Sports senior producer Alexa Pritting said. “Making workplaces more inclusive is such a huge priority for me.” (As lead producer of the Paralympics, Pritting emphasizes diversity efforts toward other underrepresented communities, particularly people with disabilities.)

“Representation matters,” she added. “If you see somebody else doing the job that you want, then you know that it's available to you.”

## More than Just a Game

This year may be remembered for the achievements of Biles, Ledecky, Clark and Reese, but there's another woman seeking to be a game-changer at a totally different level. Vice President Kamala Harris's presidential campaign represents the chance to shatter the ultimate glass ceiling. And that, Nevarez and Phillips said, could have an impact that goes beyond politics to the sports and media worlds.

Any time a woman is elevated into any leadership role, it encourages girls and women to pursue their dreams in any and every field. “That would have a ripple effect over generations quicker than anything else could,” Nevarez said. ●

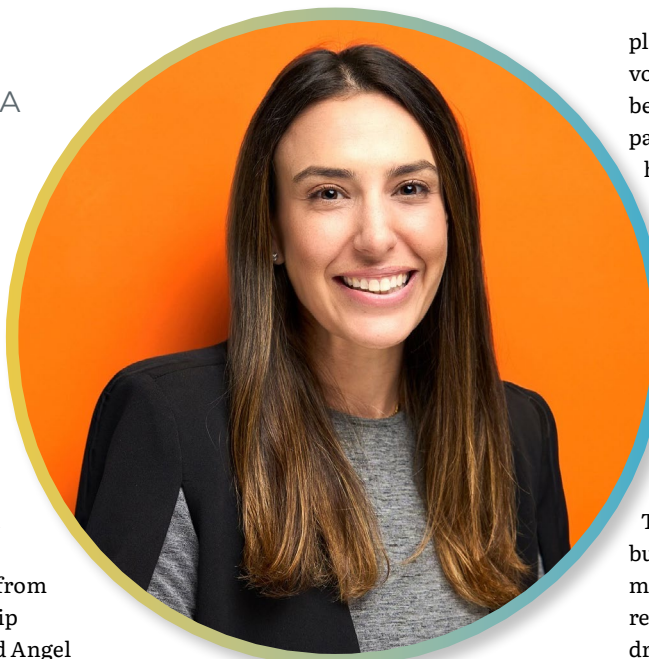
## Colie Edison

Chief Growth Officer, WNBA

**KEY STATS:** This position was created for Edison, who started in early 2022. She oversees all revenue generating business operations: corporate sponsorships, media partnerships, digital products, business development and bringing in new partners, app upgrades, sports betting and merchandising. Edison is particularly proud of a recent deal adding used car retailer CarMax to the “Change-maker” roster of top sponsors that get more involved in the league.

“This year I’ve seen more demand from the fans and the corporate partnership side,” she said of the Caitlin Clark and Angel Reese phenomenon. “We can’t keep our merch in stock.”

**VARSITY STATUS:** Edison joined Bowlero Corp. as VP of marketing in 2013 before becoming chief customer officer in 2017; two



years later she began simultaneously working as CEO of the Professional Bowlers Association (the first female CEO in PBA history), where she landed a new partnership with Fox Sports.

“I was as good a bowler as I am a basketball

player — for basketball in fourth grade, I was voted MVP, which was Most Valuable Passer, because whenever I got the ball, I would just pass it to somebody else,” said Edison, whose high bowling score is 133. “I have always been in love with the business of sports and how to elevate niche or emerging sports and leagues and bring them to the next level.”

**IN HER OWN WORDS:** “I grew up watching Knicks games with my father, and I was able to take him to Knicks playoff games as he turned 70 and was going through remission of a cancer treatment, which was the proudest moment of my life. This job didn’t exist when I was starting out but I had my passion for sports and entertainment mixed with my salesmanship and my revenue generating capabilities. I also had this drive to elevate the underdog. And I’ve always been a fan of basketball and female empowerment and encouraging women to strive for what they believe in and to never let anybody else set limitations for them. This league allows me to bring those passions to life in a way that has such a big impact on so many people.” ●

## Gloria Nevarez

Commissioner, Mountain West Conference

**KEY STATS:** Nevarez became commissioner of the Mountain West in 2023, focusing on revenue and distribution while also keeping the conference united and “maintaining our position in the NCAA ecosystem,” she said.

Nevarez must build consensus among a majority of her constituents, whether they are university board members, athletic directors or coaches. “Right now we are all aligned and rowing in the same direction with a common vision with our most recent contracts,” said Nevarez, who is also president of Women Leaders in Sports.

**VARSITY STATUS:** In her previous role as commissioner of the West Coast Conference, Nevarez became the first Hispanic-American to lead an NCAA Division I conference. She had previously worked at senior levels in the

administration of the Pac-12 Conference and at the University of Oklahoma, the University of California, Berkeley and San Jose State University. She attended the University of Massachusetts on a student-athlete scholarship for basketball and then earned a law degree from Berkeley.

**IN HER OWN WORDS:** “While in law school I did an externship with the school’s athletic compliance folks and it was the first time I had really thought about how you can use a legal background. I went into labor litigation, thinking I could get into pro sports that way, but I came sniffing back around colleges and became San Jose State’s first full-time compliance person. I took a 50% pay cut. My parents said, ‘What are you doing?’ But I got to build a program from scratch. I wasn’t thinking about



becoming a commissioner, I was just so thrilled to be in sports and in such a new field. I didn’t really have aspirations of leadership until I got to the WCC the first time and started serving on national committees and saw a pathway.” ●

## Patti Phillips

CEO, Women Leaders in Sports

**KEY STATS:** Since Phillips took over in 2010, Women Leaders in Sports has experienced triple-digit growth in membership while attendance at its national convention has grown by 250%. She oversees the organization's leadership events and programs, including podcasts for career advancement for women.

"We prepare and position women to work and lead in sports," Phillips said, adding that the organization is seeking to "leverage the momentum happening right now around women's sports. Everyone is into women's sports right now, which is awesome. But no one's talking about women working and leading in sports and that's where we come in."

Phillips also created and leads the Women Leaders Performance Institute, a development program for all business industries, designed through the lens of sports.

**VARSITY STATUS:** Phillips took over as CEO in 2010 when the organization was the National Association of Collegiate Women Athletic Administrators. She led the shift to focus on advancing women into leadership positions;

she eventually helped rebrand the organization in 2017 as Women Leaders in College Sports before expanding its purview with the current title last year. She said 80% of the group's members are still in the collegiate space, but they now work with the NFL and their women's program, with the LPGA and with several NWSL teams.

Phillips made her name coaching basketball and volleyball at Ottawa University in Kansas, remaking a losing basketball program into a nationally ranked one. Then she worked for the NCAA as the CHAMPS/Life Skills program coordinator. She was also color analyst for collegiate women's basketball and volleyball. Phillips spent 11 years as executive director of the Women's Intersport Network in Kansas City, a nonprofit focusing on leadership development in girls and women through participation in sports.

**IN HER OWN WORDS:** The NACWAA was an advocacy group that was writing letters saying, "we don't like this or that," but it had lost the energy and focus for what was needed so I



wasn't interested in the job initially. But I saw potential in women coming together to have a voice, so we rebuilt with the idea of women helping women so we changed our mission statement from an advocacy organization to a leadership organization. We've become a career leadership and career strategy organization. We advocate by advancing leaders. ●

## Alexa Pritting

Senior Producer, NBC Sports

**KEY STATS:** Pritting oversees the network's coverage of the Paralympic Games and produces NBC's Olympics figure skating and gymnastics broadcasts. She is also a producer on many national and world championships, such as the U.S. Figure Skating Championships. She has won four Sports Emmy Awards.

**VARSITY STATUS:** A competitive figure skater in high school, Pritting later studied broadcast journalism



at Syracuse University. After briefly working at ESPN as a figure-skating researcher, she joined NBC for the 2008 Torino Winter Olympics. This year marks her 10th Olympics and sixth Paralympics. She has been overseeing Paralympics coverage since 2017.

**IN HER OWN WORDS:** "This

is just a dream job and it keeps growing and getting better. When I went to Syracuse, I was a little burned out from figure skating and looking for a fresh start where no one knew me as that figure-skating girl. But then when the 2008 NBC Torino Olympic internship came around, Molly Solomon, who's now my boss, asked if I knew about any of the sports being covered. I actually thought, 'Should I say it?' But I did tell them. My initial intent was to get as far away as possible and then it sucked me back in. But I loved it and wanted to go to as many Olympics as I could. It will never cease to be exciting. And overseeing the Paralympic productions has been invigorating. It still has so much potential and I want to apply everything I've learned at the Olympics to growing the Paralympics. There is just so much we need to do still on that property." ●

## Sara Ries

Senior Director, NFL Network

**KEY STATS:** Since ascending to senior director in 2022, Ries has taken on more responsibilities for big-picture planning. “I’m doing more on the creative side of planning larger events, like the remotes we put together for international games and relaunching Good Morning Football, which was previously in New York, for the West Coast,” she said.

But her proudest achievement has been her contributions to the new NFL Media studio in Inglewood, California. “We really got a chance to design a studio from



the ground up, laying out sets and stages,” Ries said.

**VARSITY STATUS:** Ries joined NFL Network in 2006 after one year as an anchor/reporter for KQTV St. Joseph, Missouri (known as KQ2), after graduating from Syracuse University’s Newhouse School. She’d been inspired in high school by a local sports reporter who spoke to her class. “I thought, ‘This is not a real job,’” she recalled. “I thought I’d have to be in a cubicle 9 to 5.”

While she initially presumed she’d

pursue a career in front of the camera, her time at KQTV — “putting on makeup in five minutes in the van, pulling the camera, getting a four-minute hit and being done for the night” — quickly lost its appeal.

At NFL Network, she was drawn to the energy and excitement of the control room. “I wanted to be calling the shots,” she said. After three years as a production assistant, she rose to senior associate director and then, in 2014, she became a director. Ries was promoted to her current title in 2022.

**IN HER OWN WORDS:** “As a senior director, I get to do more hiring and make more decisions about the people coming into our building. As you come up the ladder, you have more of a voice and can say, ‘Maybe we aren’t casting our net wide enough.’ I think we’re doing a better job at being very concerted in our efforts now. That’s been a big push in our production department. When you bring those voices into the room, women and minorities who weren’t getting the chance but who are super-qualified, that feels awesome.” ●

## Jill Schwartz

Marketing Manager, FAST Studios Streaming Networks

**KEY STATS:** Schwartz’s portfolio at FAST Studios includes the Women’s Sports Network (the first 24/7 streaming network dedicated to women’s sports); Team USA TV, the official Team USA free ad-supported TV (FAST) channel; and Racing America. She designs all marketing materials, including presentations, sales one-sheets, channel key art, tune-in graphics, CTV billboard campaigns and additional branding assets, and works with the sales team to execute request for proposal (RFP) decks for brand partnerships. As lead designer in deck proposals she helped land high-profile sponsors in 2023, including Michelob Ultra, Frito-Lay and State Farm. “We’re really seeing the growth of these leagues,” Schwartz said. “We now have 17 league partners with the Women’s Sports Network, which is really exciting.”

**VARSITY STATUS:** Since graduating from Emerson College, Schwartz has worked in marketing, publicity and creative services at Allied Global Marketing, DistroTV and B2+: The Custom Content Company.

**IN HER OWN WORDS:** “I always wanted to find the center between art and business, and marketing is kind of that sweet spot. I love to do art on the side, and I just felt like it was a really creative industry to get into. I didn’t follow a ton of sports growing up, but jumping into the FAST space, I became more of a fan and it has been quite a journey. Working for a start-up means having a really hands-on job and wearing a dozen hats, learning about everything from channel development to content production. Launching our first signature studio show, which is kind of the women’s version of SportsCenter, was incredibly



exciting and I was on set every day watching the production, which was led by a women-driven team of producers, hosts and editors. It really became a groundbreaking initiative.” ●

## Becky Somerville

Senior Director of Production, FanDuel TV

**KEY STATS:** Somerville joined FanDuel TV (formerly TVG) in 2017 as senior producer, which led to her current job. She oversees horse-racing content for FanDuel TV, running the production of content and managing teams both behind and in front of the camera.

**VARSITY STATUS:** Somerville grew up loving horses. “I started out watching horse racing on TV with my mom,” she said. “Then a racetrack opened in Minnesota, not far from where I lived, and I went out there and completely caught the bug. I wanted to be a jockey but got too big so I went to the racetrack industry program at the University of Arizona.” While working as an assistant trainer at Santa Anita Park, she was given a shot as on-air talent for HRTV. Knowing that life on the back side of the track was limited and led to burnout, she seized the chance. She later moved into

production and worked as both producer and talent for several years.

**IN HER OWN WORDS:** “My former boss at HRTV saw potential in me. They had done a feature on me when I was an assistant trainer and she loved the way that I looked on camera. I would never have seen it — when I was in school, I was nervous giving speeches, you would hear my voice tremble, but you just take a leap of faith. I like being on the production side more. The person on air is like a puppet with the producer pulling the strings. But I had no idea how TV was put together and had to learn everything from scratch. But I have a rounded experience and can see the race from the viewer’s side, the industry side and the gambler’s side, and felt like I was the one who could pull it all together. I still do get to go to the



big races and I can still go and pet horse noses any time I want.” ●

## Courtney Stockmal

Lead Director, ‘Fox NFL Kickoff,’ Fox Sports

**KEY STATS:** In recent years, Stockmal has been the director for Fox NFL Kickoff, Fox’s Super Bowl pregame and postgame, the FIFA Women’s World Cup and World Cup, plus MLB on Fox, Fox College Football and other shows.

“One of my proudest moments in the last five years was being part of the Super Bowl pregame show in Miami in 2020,” Stockmal said. “But the 2022 World Cup in Qatar was one of the most difficult projects we could ever do — trying to do television in the Middle East with a crew that spoke a different language, had a different religion and outlook, while we were moving an entire American production halfway across the world. But our team just knocked it out of the park.”

Stockmal also cited her work with virtual-reality sets for recent soccer tournaments as a rewarding project; she produced 200 hours of live programming over 30 days. “The only real things were the talent and the desk that they sat at,” she said. “Ev-

erything else was completely created on a computer screen and it’s never been done before.”

**VARSITY STATUS:** Stockmal joined Fox Sports in 2013 and, as an associate director, worked on the 2015 World Series, Super Bowl and World Cup. While working at Fox Sports, Stockmal has also freelanced as an associate director for *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* and *Entertainment Tonight*. She also worked on the 2016 and 2020 Olympics for NBC.

**IN HER OWN WORDS:** “I was an elite swimmer growing up and I knew I wanted to do something in sports, maybe medicine or psychology. My dad married a local news anchor and in high school she took me to work and I got to see behind the scenes of how TV worked. My eyes lit up and it was like the angels were singing, I had found what I needed to do.” ●





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# John Leguizamo Focuses on Storytelling at Hispanic TV Summit

## Annual Hispanic TV Awards recipients share stories of those who inspired them



By Joe Schramm  
jschramm@schrammnyc.com

The 22nd Annual Hispanic Television Summit, set for September 11, offers a daylong series of conversations that focuses on how TV is authentically reflecting Latino stories.

One conversation will feature actor John Leguizamo with filmmaker Ben DeJesus of NGLmitu and Luis Ortiz of Latino Public Broadcasting. They discuss *American Historia*, a three-part series that uncovers the overlooked contributions of Latinos in history. It premieres on PBS in September.

"Here we are in the 21st century, and my son can't see himself in history textbooks," Leguizamo said earlier this year at the PBS Annual Meeting. "We're not anywhere in history textbooks, and we helped build America."

Another session focuses on how Latino stories are reflected in the news and features journalists Cristina Navarrete, weekend anchor and general assignment reporter for WNJU New York (Telemundo 47); Jessica Formoso, reporter for WNYW New York (Fox 5); and Tanya Rivera, WABC New York weekend anchor.

A different session focuses on Latino stories in new productions and includes programmers like Hortensia Quadreny Tenchi of Warner Bros. Discovery, Oswald Mendez of Canela TV, Frank Scheuermann of Endemol Shine Boomdog and more.

A discussion on streaming and distribution features executives including Jen McBride from Condista; Luis Torres Bohl of Castalia and Mexicanal; Doris Vogelmann of V-Me and Evan Redwood of Google. In another session, Comcast's



Jose Velez Silva will discuss Now TV Latino, Xfinity's new streaming platform for serving Latino audiences.

A session focused on media strategies features Marina Filippelli from Orci; Ron Mendez, with GroupM Multicultural; Alex Minicucci at Horizon Media; and Carla Kelly from NBCUniversal Media. An opening keynote address is presented by another media star, Isabela Sanchez of Zubi Advertising, who is the current chair of the Hispanic Marketing Council. Plus, the agenda also includes new research findings from Altman Solon, AIMM, Nielsen and Horowitz, plus a lunchtime mariachi performance.

### Award Winners Honored

A popular segment is the presentation of the Hispanic TV Awards. This year's recipients will be recognized for their contribution to the business of TV for Hispanic audiences in the U.S. and worldwide.

Chiqui Cartagena is the director of CUNY TV and an author. She is one of the two recipients of the Rafael Eli Award for Pioneer in Hispanic Television. Her inspiration comes from her friendship with TV talk show legend, Cristina Saralegui. Cartagena covered news in her early career, and claims this for her success. She used her journalistic

**John Leguizamo on the set of PBS's *American Historia*.**

skills to develop new Spanish language media and marketing products. She said receiving this award gives her courage.

The other recipient of the Pioneer Award is Javier Saralegui, CEO of Danger TV. His mentor is Jerry Perenchio, a pioneer in Hispanic television at Univision. Saralegui shared that he was often the first employee hired for new projects and that made him realize that he would be underresourced and require him to develop an "outside the box" mindset. He said this mindset is a key to his success.

Three awards will be presented for leadership in Hispanic Television. One goes to Isabel Rafferty Zavala, founder and CEO of Canela Media. She credits her mother for her ability to remain committed to her vision of securing \$32 million in funding, making Canela Media the most heavily funded Latina-owned company in the media industry. Rafferty Zavala said that her success is due, in part, to surrounding herself with people who elevate the company and share a common vision.

VAB CEO Sean Cunningham is also a leadership recipient. He believes most advertising successes come when leaders allow young, bright people to go as far as they can as quickly as they can handle it. Cunningham said he has worked with many in the Hispanic space and being thought of as a peer leader to them gives him great personal satisfaction.

The final award for leadership is presented to Michael Roca, executive director of Omnicom Media Group's cross-cultural center of excellence. He grew up in Queens as the child of Guatemalan parents. Roca said his mother is his inspiration in his career and influenced him to develop traits of humility, ambition and empathy. He said programs like *Sabado Gigante*, *Jorge Ramos* and *Betty la Fea* were staples of his childhood. This award represents the importance of positive representation in storytelling that can only be found in Hispanic TV and media, he said.

The Hispanic Television Summit, programmed by Schramm Marketing Group during NYC TV Week, will be held at etc. Venues, 360 Madison Ave., New York. For more information, visit [nyctvweek.com](http://nyctvweek.com). ●





# 40 UNDER FORTY NYC TV WEEK

## Making Their Mark as The Media Transforms

‘40 Under 40 New York’ honorees innovate and excel in an ever-changing video industry

It's a disruptive time in the TV industry as shifting business models are leading to sea changes in how video content is watched, distributed and monetized.

Fortunately, there's also no shortage of rising industry stars who are up to the challenge of being creative and innovative enough to keep things moving forward.

For over a decade, *Broadcasting+Cable*, *Multichannel News* and *Next TV* have honored a select group of industry pros under 40 — both established veterans and up-and-comers — as part of the 40 Under 40 New York awards program.

The 40 Under 40 awards are designed to honor those at the forefront of a changing industry. Through a nomination and judging

process, *B+C Multichannel News* has selected a group of creative, tech-savvy visionaries helping to lead media in new directions, wherever the viewers are.

The 2024 New York 40 Under 40 class will be honored at a gala party September 12, capping off Future B2B's NYC TV Week of events, which also includes *Advanced Advertising*, the *Hispanic Television Summit* and the *Next TV Summit*. The 40 Under 40 awards party will take place at the 230 Fifth Rooftop at 230 5th Ave. in Manhattan.

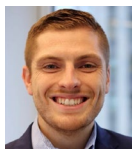
For more information and to register, visit [tvweek40under40.com](http://tvweek40under40.com).

On the following pages, read more about the 2024 40 Under 40 New York, listed alphabetically.



**Greg Barnard**  
Senior Director, Content  
Acquisitions and Strategy,  
Vizio

Barnard has elevated Vizio's WatchFree Plus streaming service to the next level. With a portfolio boasting more than 300 channels and 15,000 on-demand titles, he has led negotiations with numerous media partners. He has secured exclusive content deals for acclaimed shows such as *@Home with Tori*, featuring Tori Spelling, and *The Pantry*, hosted by chef Tom Colicchio. He oversees the team responsible for negotiating and closing content, service and tech agreements for WatchFree Plus, all while unifying processes, implementing efficient project management strategies and strengthening relationships. With more than 17 years of industry experience, Barnard's influence extends far beyond Vizio. This is evident in his roles as a founding board member for HRTS Associates NYC, adviser for Digital Entertainment Group (DEG) and mentor with the T. Howard Foundation and Ghetto Film School. Barnard's relentless dedication and visionary approach continue to shape the future of entertainment.



**Kevin Belbey**  
Sports Media Agent,  
Creative Artists Agency

Belbey represents many top sports broadcasters, including Noah Eagle (NBC Sports), Fabrizio Romano (an Italian sports journalist) and Kevin Brown (Baltimore Orioles/ESPN). He also signed former NFL stars Devin and Jason McCourty, negotiating a multiyear, seven-figure-per-year deal for Devin to join NBC Sports as an analyst for *Football Night in America*, and a deal for Jason to join CBS Sports as an NFL and college football game analyst, in addition to co-host of NFL Network's *Good Morning Football*. Belbey also hustled to sign Ian Eagle in 2022, who recently succeeded Jim Nantz as the play-by-play person for the NCAA men's basketball Final Four for CBS Sports and TNT Sports. Upon NBC Sports' acquisition of Big Ten media rights, Kevin orchestrated several prominent moves that would see CAA clients define NBC's coverage, including Noah Eagle as the featured voice of NBC's *Big Ten Saturday Night* football package. He also represented

Drew Carter in his contract to join the Boston Celtics as a play-by-play announcer.



**Noella Charles**  
VP, Development &  
Original Production,  
Unscripted, **WE tv/AiBlk**

Charles has helped revitalize WE tv's offerings, executive-producing brand-defining, celebrity-driven ensemble docuseries, including Keke Wyatt's *World*, chronicling the journey of R&B/gospel artist Wyatt; *Toya & Reginae*, following Atlanta's dynamic mother-daughter duo; *Bold & Bougie*, featuring five women determined to live unapologetically on their own terms; *The Barnes Bunch*, following NBA champion Matt Barnes, his fiancée, model Anansa Sims, and their blended family of six children; and *Love During Lockup*, about couples fighting to keep their love alive while one partner is incarcerated. While at Viacom, Charles helped lead BET's music series *106 & Park* to its highest ratings with various segments and larger awards-show initiatives and worked as a coordinating producer on MTV's *Wild 'N Out*. At Fuse TV, she launched shows such as *The United States of Hip-Hop* and *Trending 10*, and was a producer for *The People's Choice Awards* on E!



**Beau Decker**  
VP, Growth Marketing,  
Endeavor Streaming

Decker leads a team of marketing strategists, analysts and data scientists who operate as an extension of Endeavor Streaming's clients to help them scale their businesses through marketing, analytics, data and technology, and to drive efficiencies across acquisition, retention and monetization of direct-to-consumer businesses. He has established himself as an effective leader who is highly proficient in implementing unified business strategies that embrace the complexities of the modern media ecosystem. His unique mix of business expertise, understanding of advanced technological marketing and data capabilities and his customer-centric approach directly impacts clients' ability to maximize the value of their direct-to-consumer streaming businesses. Decker developed the Endeavor Streaming Audience Development team as a direct

result of a market challenge: Regardless of an organization's size, OTT teams often lack the resources to run and scale a streaming service efficiently. Since its inception in 2022, the team has successfully supported a substantial number of high-profile clients, including UEFA.tv and UFC Fight Pass.



**Kirby Dixon**  
Director, Publicity,  
History

Dixon has spearheaded the communications campaigns for tentpole History series including *Alone*, which *The New Yorker* recently called "the best reality series ever made;" *The Harlem Hellfighters*, executive produced by *Good Morning America*'s Robin Roberts; *761st Tank Battalion: The Original Black Panthers* from Morgan Freeman; and *The Curse of Oak Island*, among others. She stands out for her thoughtful, creative and nuanced approach to every project, her co-workers said, mining each story for the significant and often untold aspects. Her never-give-up attitude has led to key placements for programming with *New York Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, MSNBC, GMA, CNN and other key media outlets. In the past year alone, Kirby has worked to gain access to some of the most high-profile U.S. government locations and officials for key press events. She facilitated a conversation between the nation's first Black secretary of defense, Lloyd Austin, and Morgan Freeman at the Pentagon to discuss *761st Tank Battalion*. She's also a tireless champion for diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives at History and parent A+E.



**Tori Fernandes**  
VP, Corporate  
Communications,  
The Walt Disney Co.

Fernandez has unified Disney's narrative across its streaming, digital and linear properties as one authoritative entity, and the integrated strategy has reinvented the way the company comes to market. In January, her corporate communications team spearheaded all press for Disney's Global Tech & Data Showcase, which took place in person for the first time at CES. The team created an intentional campaign that cascaded throughout the week. This strategic plan included a press preview with key executives and journalists;

exclusive stories with various publications aligned with the timing of the showcase; six separate executive interviews and panels during the week that led up to the event; and live social media coverage that extensively followed the excitement on stage. Amid an incredibly competitive CES news cycle, Disney Advertising clinched over 50 unique headlines for exclusive feature stories and organic placements. Also helping cut through the noise was a video message from CEO Bob Iger that Fernandes helped produce.



**Joe Fitzpatrick**  
Director, Programmatic Partnerships,  
**NBCUniversal**

Sitting at the crossroads of technology and addressable advertising, Fitzpatrick has rare knowledge of the industry landscape. Whether engaging with clients and understanding their challenges or seeing opportunities in the content provider world, his multifaceted approach to solutions has been a boon for the companies he has worked for and with. Fitzpatrick joined NBCU in June, following stints at Minute Media, USA Today Network, AP and Fox News Channel. He drives the continued adoption of automated, data-driven and programmatic media buying across NBCU's portfolio of digital and streaming assets. Colleagues said his commitment and versatility are key character traits in establishing him as a pioneer in the programmatic world, and his personality makes for a warm presence at conferences, industry think tanks and group lunch meetings.



**Chris Giliberti**  
Co-Founder and CEO,  
**Avail**

Giliberti launched Avail in July 2021, after he had been global head of TV and film at Spotify. Avail offers studios and talent agencies a script summarization tool and is increasingly focused on the content/intellectual property licensing and AI search space. In July, Avail launched Corpus, which enables creators and media rightsholders to license their work to AI model developers. Corpus leverages collective scale to get smaller publishers and creators in on

the licensing action. Giliberti's background in TV and film has made him well-versed in the painstaking process of producing successful series and movies and the so-called "pain points" that can be addressed to make production faster and better. He has emerged as a key figure at the intersection of Silicon Valley and Hollywood and an increasingly trusted voice in that relationship.



**Alexander Groysman**  
VP, Advertising Product Development,  
**Spectrum Reach**

Groysman has been instrumental in bringing innovative products to the advanced advertising space. He oversees 20 diverse product managers and analysts emerging as leaders, and has authored two patents related to the converging linear and digital TV ecosystems and enablement of transparent marketplaces for premium TV media. He has been a key leader in transforming Spectrum Reach, the ad-sales business of Charter Communications, to adopt programmatic technologies and expand the availability of addressable targeting solutions in a privacy-compliant manner to better service customers. Groysman also leads several initiatives around measuring and optimizing supply quality and performance attribution, ensuring that every campaign is executed and optimized against the best media possible. In a remarkable step forward for linear addressable advertising and the industry, Groysman and his team found a way to expand linear addressable multicast ad inventory, where many people view the same network feed.



**Shannon Guarascio**  
Senior Manager,  
**CBS Affiliate Relations**

Guarascio's resilience in navigating challenges in an ever-evolving television landscape, whether it's broadcast rights or pivoting strategies to keep original programming at its peak during the writers and actors strikes of 2023, proves she can thrive amid any obstacles. She has spent 15 years at CBS. Due to her efforts to ramp up promotion with affiliates for February's Super Bowl, it was the highest-viewed network broadcast of all time, with

more than 120 million viewers tuning in. Guarascio is now working in a hybrid role of overseeing and managing affiliates in addition to communications and operations for CBS Affiliate Relations. As a member of the Paramount Veterans Network, she has also supported and influenced the work between military veterans and CBS programming.



**Walid Hamri**  
AVP, Media Systems Engineering,  
**Sinclair**

Hamri's leadership in engineering next-generation media systems creates substantial opportunities for content creators, producers and broadcasters, encouraging them to move away from legacy operating models. His work to create more adaptable media ecosystems allows media organizations such as broadcast giant Sinclair to innovate by leveraging the latest technologies. He has designed and helped architect massively scaled distribution systems, capitalized on emerging cloud capabilities to drive media supply-chain optimization, and harnessed the latest in media signaling to streamline media operations. Prior to joining Sinclair, Hamri was chief product officer at SeaChange International, where he led the product and solution team in promoting the multiscreen Video Delivery Platform. Before that, he was VP of solutions & business development at Ateame, a specialist in video compression and delivery solutions. He holds both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from Grenoble Institute of Technology in France.



**Christina Haubrock**  
VP, Advertising Growth Strategy,  
**NBCUniversal Advertising & Partnerships**

Haubrock conceptualizes and develops new ad products for NBCUniversal's Peacock and its additional streaming assets. Regularly reimagining the advertising experience to maximize effectiveness, she acts on behalf of two customers: the viewer and the advertiser. By creating custom ad experiences for different types of content and introducing innovative ad formats, she plays a critical role in rewriting the advertising playbook, driving ultimate

engagement for consumers and meaningful impact for marketers. Prior to Peacock launching in 2020, she was an integral voice in architecting NBCU's AVOD vision and has evolved the go-to-market strategy as the streamer has scaled. In 2022, Haubrock helped bring NBCU's streaming portfolio to market with Peacock Premier, leveraging Peacock's premium AVOD platform to deliver maximum impact for clients; and Peacock "AX" (Audience Extension), leveraging the entire footprint of NBCU's streaming assets to deliver maximum reach.



**Alix Hoberman**  
Managing Director, Sales  
LG Ad Solutions

Hoberman joined LG Ad Solutions in 2021 and has become integral to the company's business, helping to build and develop LG's Media & Entertainment East Coast sales efforts. When she joined LG, Hoberman was a senior account executive coordinating and managing advertising campaigns for smart-TV ad inventory — and she quickly proved to be a rising star, developing positive relationships throughout the organization, and with clients such as Warner Bros. Discovery, Paramount, BET, Fubo, Pluto, A&E and the NBA. She also fostered several key agency relationships, including with Horizon Media and Hearts & Science. Hoberman now takes the lead on many go-to-market sales packages, collaborating with marketing and sales and contributing to the development of LG Ad Solutions' measurement strategies. She oversees a team of sellers responsible for more than \$30 million in revenue — a 200% increase compared to her first year with the company.



**Isaac Holub**  
Co-Founder and Head of  
Development, **Lucky 8**

Holub has played a crucial role in establishing Lucky 8, one of the unscripted industry's most successful fully-independent production shops. Lucky 8 shows include *Unlocked: A Jail Experiment*, which premiered on Netflix in the spring and highlights a daring approach to the challenges of incarceration. Holub is an executive producer on the show and is also behind two



of History's *That Built America* franchises: He launched Season 5 of *The Food That Built America* in early 2024 and will launch Season 2 of *The Mega-Brands That Built America* later this year. In 2023, Holub was integral to the creation, development and sale of *Extraordinary Birder With Christian Cooper* for Disney Plus and *Booked: First Day In* for A&E. Holub also executive produces Nat Geo's long-running hit *To Catch a Smuggler*. He was a producer at National Geographic prior to co-founding Lucky 8, where he produced *Brain Games*, *Border Wars* and *American Weed*, among other shows.



**Anmarie Hordern**  
Anchor/Chief Political  
Correspondent,  
**Bloomberg**

Hordern is a co-anchor on the Bloomberg Television morning show *Surveillance*, where the anchors' "daily conversations with leaders and decision-makers from Wall Street to Washington and beyond cover the latest in business, investment and geopolitics," the network said. She conducts interviews with world leaders and newsmakers, including the energy ministers from Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Russian Federation. She also serves as chief political correspondent. In addition to her work with Bloomberg Television, Hordern has contributed to Bloomberg.com, Quicktake and Bloomberg Businessweek, among other platforms. In 2022, she wrote a Bloomberg Businessweek piece sharing a personal story on efforts to evacuate a colleague's family following the collapse of Afghanistan. Prior to her work on *Surveillance*, Hordern co-anchored the politics and policies program *Balance of Power*. Before that, she was the executive producer for Bloomberg TV's EMEA

newsroom, managing a team of more than a dozen producers from Dubai to London.



**Lawrence Jones**  
Co-Host, 'Fox & Friends,'  
**Fox News Channel**

Jones was the youngest Black man to helm a solo program in cable news history when *Lawrence Jones Cross Country* launched on Fox News Channel. The program saw him talk to people across the country who often feel like their voices are not heard. He spotlighted local stories that spoke to larger issues, such as gun violence and the fentanyl crisis plaguing the United States. During his time as an enterprise reporter, Lawrence traveled to 49 of the 50 states for network reports. In fall 2023, he moved up to morning program *Fox & Friends*, where he continues to tackle the big stories of the day and break them down in a digestible way. He has also brought a younger perspective to the program. Born the son of a teen mother in Texas, as a child Jones dreamed not of working in television, but of being a police officer.



**Sean Kelly**  
Senior Director, Ad Sales,  
**Vizio**

Kelly joined Vizio in 2019 as a founding member of the Vizio Ads organization, tasked with establishing an East Coast ad sales presence. At the time, the region had generated zero in revenue. Since then, revenue has grown to over \$135 million annually, and Kelly oversees about \$110 million. His team's clients include a diverse roster of general-market advertisers across verticals such as auto, pharma, telco, insurance and travel. Promoted to his current role in 2023, Kelly's responsibilities include negotiating long-term commitments with several large agency holding companies based on spend volume, unique offerings and partnership benefits. During his tenure at Vizio, he was instrumental in the creation of the associate director program, which provides junior employees with professional development opportunities and management skill training. He also continues to mentor both account executives and new employees, fostering a culture of collaboration and inclusivity.

# FOX NEWS MEDIA

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CO-HOST OF FOX & FRIENDS



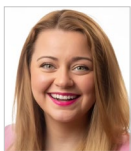
**BILL MELUGIN**

LOS ANGELES CORRESPONDENT



**Madeline Kissel**  
VP, Business  
Development and  
Affiliate Relations,  
**Viamedia**

With her unique blend of rapid adaptability, innate sales skills that have closed major deals, marketing acumen that has led to successful innovative advertising campaigns and a network of cable TV industry relationships, Kissel is a visionary transforming media advertising in North America. She cultivates and manages partnerships with video service providers and advertisers, including over 60 sales partnerships across 70 cities. Viamedia's managed services business line has seen a staggering 300% increase, evolving into one of the company's highest profit-margin segments. Her exceptional sales insight has not only signed 20 new partners and renewed over 50, but also significantly boosted revenue while maintaining a 100% renewal rate. Kissel's development and implementation of dynamic advertising educational content have propelled industry-wide advancement, demonstrating her exceptional ability to drive growth and foster innovation in a highly competitive industry. One of her key accomplishments has been securing a partnership with cable operator Sparklight that brought 300,000 subscribers to Viamedia.



**Amanda Klecker**  
SVP, Marketing &  
Franchise, **pocket.watch**  
Klecker is head of marketing  
and brand strategy for pocket.

watch, the largest independent kids and family studio, working with the biggest children's programming creators in the world to create global franchises. That includes engaging more than 1 billion subscribers and 661 billion views on YouTube alone, according to pocket.watch. She leads various teams, including marketing, franchise, press, social, e-commerce and creative, changing the way families connect with media. In the last year, Klecker paved new ground for both the creator economy and kids entertainment by driving first-of-their-kind collaborations and AI innovations with megabrands that had never before considered working with intellectual property hatched on YouTube. That includes her work with

grocery brand Dole, personalized video outfit Cameo Kids and tech company Veritone. She also launched the first creator-only record label, pocket.watch Records, distributed by Universal Music Group.



**Andrew Longworth**  
VP of Advanced TV,  
**Innovid**

Colleagues describe Longworth as an innovator and a driver of action, both of which set Innovid up well for the future. Across measurement, optimization and creative, he works with major publishers to spearhead key initiatives. His accomplishments include bringing interactive ads to the Super Bowl; closing the measurement/optimization gap with Instant Optimization, which allows advertisers to immediately optimize ad performance in flight; and making granular, cross-platform measurement more accessible to local advertisers. Longworth's ability to demystify complex technology and strategy has made him an invaluable asset within Innovid and the broader ad tech industry. In 2024, he continues to be laser-focused on sell-side innovation. He will be behind big news around new ad experiences during live events, real-time optimization initiatives at scale and the global expansion of Innovid's measurement footprint. He also works to support sell-side players in their efforts to embrace AI initiatives.



**Adam Lynch**  
Advanced Advertising  
Systems Engineer,  
**Viamedia**

Co-workers describe Lynch as someone with an innovative spirit to go with his unparalleled resilience and technical acumen. With more than 14 years of technical experience, he holds a remarkable eight patents. He has architected multiple one-of-a-kind advertising solutions that bridge linear and digital advertising, serving 70 pay TV providers in 27 states and placing over 1 million ads daily. Born with dyslexia and ADHD and being on the spectrum, Lynch has harnessed these conditions as unique strengths. His ability to break down complex problems into manageable tasks has led to innovative solutions and technological advancements that many deemed impossible. His knack

for seeing processes amidst chaos drives unprecedented creativity and problem-solving, making him an invaluable asset to Viamedia. His projects include the creation, development and implementation of QTT, which integrates the digital ecosystem with premium linear cable TV ads; and innovations within dynamic ad insertion, with the development and implementation of Viamedia's Parrot ADS.



**Zachary Malet**  
Senior Director, Sports  
Business Development &  
Innovation, **ESPN**

What his colleagues describe as Malet's relentless pursuit of innovation comes from introducing groundbreaking ideas directly to sports fans. He has played a pivotal role in ESPN's alternative broadcasts, spearheading the live, animated NHL Big City Greens Classic — the first telecast of its kind. His role also involves negotiating and overseeing ESPN's extensive portfolio of third-party business agreements/partnerships, with a keen emphasis on driving strategic innovation, maximizing revenue and fostering crucial technology partnerships. Malet's expertise has led to the successful negotiation of several multimillion-dollar deals for the sports giant. His tenure since 2012 has been marked by significant contributions across various divisions, including Disney Platform Distribution, where he managed distribution of Disney properties (including ABC, ESPN and Disney Plus) with cable and streaming partners, and in the content strategy and college sports groups at ESPN programming and acquisitions.



**Rachel Marcus Fawkes**  
Director of Content and  
Editorial, **Amagi**

Marcus Fawkes got her start at ESPN shooting and editing video. While at ESPN, she pushed for video tech beyond the realms of cable, making sure younger users could access video through their phones and tablets before that behavior was the norm. She covered the NBA Finals, College Football Playoff, NBA draft, College World Series and X Games while at ESPN, among other giant sports events. Marcus Fawkes shifted to Wynn Resorts, where she was director of content, and joined Amagi in July 2023. She is

currently building and leading content marketing strategy for the company, a leader in unified cloud workflows for TV and OTT. She also spearheads Amagi's Airtime webinar series and quarterly FAST industry report. A Syracuse grad, Marcus Fawkes worked at SNY earlier in her career, where her role included covering 'Cuse sports.



**Sean Mathew**  
VP, Media Director  
Investments, **Mediahub**

After working to invigorate brands like Google/YouTube and Kohler, Mathew joined Mediahub as a supervisor on the video investments team in 2019 for a new challenge: going beyond "spots and dots" media buying to harness the power of data-driven storytelling to drive key business results. Since then, he's been working with brands across a variety of sectors, including entertainment, retail and financial services. Focusing on Mediahub's Navy Federal Credit Union and Netflix accounts, he negotiated a unique promotion for Netflix's *Your Place of Mine* on ABC's *The Bachelor*. Mathew takes an active role in both agency and personal team development. He meets weekly with his team, dedicating time to training and mentorship, and often shelling out any useful financial and investing tips that he learns outside of his industry expertise. A testament to his leadership is his team's minimal turnover rate — 90% retention over the last three years.



**Bill Melugin**  
Correspondent,  
**Fox News**

Melugin joined Fox News Channel in 2021 as a Los Angeles-based correspondent after a stint as an investigative reporter at Fox-owned KTTV Los Angeles. He has spent several hundred days reporting from the U.S.'s southern border, breaking a number of stories. In 2022, Melugin was one of the first national reporters on the scene at Robb Elementary School following the shooting in Uvalde, Texas. Some of his notable reporting included an interview with a grandfather of a missing child and dispelling rumors the suspect was being chased by U.S. Border Patrol prior to the shooting. During his time at KTTV, his reporting appeared on *Tucker Carlson Tonight*

and *The Ingraham Angle*, among other Fox News programs. Melugin always strives to bring the human element into the stories he covers. In 2023, he was profiled in the *Los Angeles Times* and described as a "rising star" for his well-sourced and dedicated coverage.



**Heidi Meyers**  
Director of Marketing,  
**AMC Networks**

Meyers is a neuroscience researcher-turned-digital marketer who brings a unique perspective to strategy. She is a proven expert at cultivating the fandoms behind AMC's shows, and her work on the launches of *Mayfair Witches* and *Interview With the Vampire*, as well as Season 2 of *Dark Winds*, drove critical praise and ratings. Meyers got her start in digital media at an online dating company, which offered her a unique look at consumer behavior. She moved to WebMD, where she led paid-media strategy for pharma clients, government agencies and household brands such as Johnson & Johnson. Shifting to HBO, where she was digital and social media coordinator, she worked on the content strategy for *Game of Thrones*, *Westworld* and *Mosaic*, among other series. She also founded a microcontent firm that specialized in branding strategy and content creation for live events, from local improv to national theater tours. She joined AMC Networks in 2021, where she pioneers e-commerce strategy, launching fan-centric campaigns such as "Best Fandom Ever."



**Ryan Murray**  
Senior Manager, Content  
Distribution, **Roku**

Murray oversees the development and negotiation of app and channel partnerships across SVOD, AVOD and FAST business lines on the Roku platform. Whether he's leading a multilayered distribution agreement with "Tier 1" media partners or strategizing internally, he speaks with substance, confidence and an eye toward a solution, his co-workers said. Prior to joining Roku, he was director of U.S. Distribution at Paramount Global, where he led negotiations for MVPD and OTT deals across the company's cable networks and CBS. His career began at Viacom, where he was a member of the content distribution

rotational program. He transitioned to a role within the sales and business development team, focusing on content partnerships and distribution agreements. Murray is making his panel debut this year at the StreamTV Show in Denver, where he will speak on "Approaching a New Frontier of Sports, Weather, & News Broadcasting & Streaming."



**Joseph Nuñez**  
Director of  
Communications and  
Public Relations,  
**Brightcove**

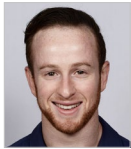
Nuñez spearheads global corporate communications, public relations and social media functions for Brightcove, the streaming technology company that powers top media and TV organizations. Since he joined Brightcove early in 2023, his work leading the company's thought leadership and executive communications efforts has resulted in more than 50 interviews and placements for the CEO among key national programs and publications, including CNBC, *The Wall Street Journal*, Fox Business Network and Sirius XM. Prior to joining Brightcove, whose partners include AMC Networks, BBC Studios and The National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, Nuñez had a stint at Twitter and previously led consumer publicity efforts for NBCUniversal's Spanish-language broadcast and cable networks. There, he led the publicity efforts to launch Telemundo morning show *Hoy Dia*. He also ran the PR efforts for more than a dozen show launches and new seasons, including Telemundo's *Exatlon* and *La Casa de los Famosos*.



**Eric Ortega**  
Executive Producer,  
**ABC News**

Eric Ortega, executive producer on *ABC News Live With Linsey Davis*, is a decisive newsroom leader who builds stronger newscasts and journalists wherever he works, according to colleagues. An innovator, he frequently proposes new ideas for presenting material that brings greater awareness to impactful stories. His efforts are paying off: *ABC News Live With Linsey Davis* was nominated for four News & Documentary Emmy Awards this year and became the first streaming newscast nominated for best live news program. He

joined ABC News in late 2022 after a stint at Vice News, where he ran *Vice News Tonight*. Before that, Ortega worked at NBCUniversal, starting in the page program, then moving on to line producing at *Early Today* and MSNBC and producing on *MTP Daily with Chuck Todd* and *The Briefing With Luke Russert*, among other programs. Before his television career began, Ortega worked on Capitol Hill, including his time as legislative assistant to former Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.).



**Reid Pakula**  
VP of Talent,  
IF Management

Across his six years at IF Management, Pakula has amassed a client list that includes many rising stars in news. He has helped his clients make the move from smaller markets to some of the nation's largest, including Chicago and Philadelphia, while helping them think of different ways to improve their on-air delivery. Bringing high levels of energy and engagement to his role, Pakula has been able to create great relationships with news directors and executives at all levels. A University of Maryland graduate, he earned a degree in finance with a fellowship in sports management. He was a student manager for the men's basketball team and interned with the Brooklyn Nets of the NBA. Prior to joining IF, he worked for Octagon Sports & Entertainment. Pakula's love for news goes back to boyhood, when he'd watch the 6 a.m. newscast before school.



**John-Marcus Phillips**  
VP of Product, **Effectv**  
Phillips manages a team of 35 product leaders at Effectv, the ad sales division of Comcast Cable.

He leads the introduction of innovations to the ad platform that drive better outcomes across all stages of the marketing funnel. Phillips and his team played an instrumental role in developing a new suite of ad solutions geared to political advertisers, aimed at helping marketers reach, engage and connect with voters in an election year. He has been involved in efforts to combine the best aspects of traditional linear advertising with the power of digital, most recently partnering with the

Comcast and FreeWheel technology teams to introduce dynamic ad insertion capabilities across new live viewing platforms such as Xfinity Stream. He has also helped introduce new measurement capabilities for ad units on the Xfinity guide experience. Phillips addresses each challenge with curiosity and passion, co-workers said, describing him as a "transformational leader."



**Bijan Razzaghi**  
Director, Business & Legal  
Affairs, **Brightcove**

Razzaghi is a key asset for the streaming company in terms of motivating teams, leading projects and driving results while navigating complex legal issues specific to the intersection of software and streaming. A dynamic attorney with extensive experience in the cloud-based technology industry, he provides strategic counsel on a range of commercial matters spanning Brightcove's corporate, business and legal affairs to drive growth. He has also negotiated groundbreaking deals for Brightcove's partnerships with Google, Magnite, SpringServe and PubMatic. He supports Brightcove's largest and most strategic partnerships, vendor and commercial relationships, privacy program, mergers and acquisitions and new company initiatives. Before joining Brightcove, he was corporate counsel at Parallel Wireless for nearly five years, having started there as an intern. He joined Brightcove in early 2021 as commercial counsel and has moved up rapidly.



**Gardner Reed**  
Senior VP of  
Development,  
**Wheelhouse  
Entertainment**

Reed developed three series for the studio that launched last year, including *King of Collectibles*: *The Goldin Touch* and *Designing Miami* for Netflix and *Secret Restoration* for History. He's also behind the upcoming HGTV series *Divided by Design*, having found the talent, developed the concept and sold the show, as well as an unannounced dating series on OWN, a celebrity-driven pilot in production with Prime Video, an ensemble docuseries in development with Netflix and other projects for TLC, Max,

Bravo, E! and National Geographic. Reed gets a true rush from finding unique characters with distinct points of view, developing viable concepts around them, and ultimately selling them through for the world to see. As an avid consumer of unscripted programming, his love for the type of content he develops fuels his initiative-driven approach, which has resulted in a growing track record of success. Colleagues said Reed is obsessed with what he does and that passion shines through in the content he creates.



**Zack Rosenberg**  
Founder and CEO, **Qortex**

Rosenberg founded Qortex in 2020, setting out to connect video content with advertising outcomes by pioneering a unique in-video ad experience called On-Stream. This noninterruptive experience delivers overlay ads during editorial content for greatest viewability. To optimize for viewer engagement and sentiment, Qortex's proprietary AI engine contextualizes each frame of a video to determine the highest moment of impact and serve a contextually relevant message. A few years before he launched Qortex, Zack founded WatchFantom, a sports media company that amplified independent sports leagues and sports radio shows. After acquiring the rights to multiple leagues and recruiting hosts from across the country, the company became a hub for local and national sports content with more than 600,000 daily viewers. Qortex is off to a promising start: In 2022, it was named Programmatic Power Player by AdExchanger. Last year, it closed a \$10 million seed round of funding.



**Bradley Singer**  
Partner, **WME**

A talent agent, Singer's clients include journalists, thought leaders, production companies and publishers. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in drama from Carnegie Mellon University, he joined WME's mailroom training program in 2009. He was named partner at the agency in 2021. Over the years, Singer has been involved in the packaging and sale of such programs as Netflix's *Explained*, CNN's *History of Comedy*, Disney/ABC's *Tamron Hall*, Apple TV Plus' *Wanted: The Escape of Carlos Ghosn* and ESPN's *Skin in the Game*. His long client



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list includes *The View* co-hosts Sunny Hostin and Ana Navarro, CNN anchor Kaitlan Collins, MSNBC host Symone Sanders-Townsend, PBS *NewsHour* co-anchor Amna Nawaz, ABC News anchor Linsey Davis, actor LeVar Burton, author Ibram X. Kendi and academic Henry Louis “Skip” Gates Jr. Working on behalf of his clients, he saw Collins moved into a primetime slot at CNN and Nawaz become anchor on PBS *NewsHour*, among other promotions.



**Gaëlle Smaghe**  
Director, Product  
Management, **LG Ad  
Solutions**

Smaghe is a driving force behind LG Ad Solutions’ product and engineering team. As one of the earliest hires at the company, she has advanced over the past five years from business analyst to director. Smaghe collaborated with LG Electronics to introduce a dynamic rotating carousel ad unit on the LG smart TV home screen. The unit expanded ad space by 10 times and drove a remarkable increase in click-through rates while enhancing user experience and engagement on the TV home screen by over 10% by improving ad load time and seamlessly integrating auto installation of apps into the user workflow. Smaghe has also led the company’s participation in beta programs, including the introduction of video advertising on the home screen, as well as innovative ad offerings like the screensaver ad unit, which have diversified content offerings and boosted performance metrics.



**Lydia Tefera**  
Director, Brand  
Marketing, **AMC  
Networks**

Tefera joined AMC Networks over six years ago, coming on board as social media marketing coordinator and moving up to digital marketing and social media manager by the fall of 2021. A graduate of Loyola University (Maryland) with a master’s degree in emerging media, colleagues said Tefera brings relentless drive for innovation to the workplace, developing pioneering marketing strategies that propel brand growth and market differentiation. She was instrumental in the rebrand of Allblk, which rejuvenated the former Urban Movie Channel. She is campaign lead for original series *Parish*,



conceptualizing and executing a comprehensive marketing campaign that effectively targeted key demographics and maximized engagement across various platforms. She is now spearheading the marketing strategy for the rebrand of WE tv. Prior to her current role, Lydia was social marketing Lead for Allblk. She is in touch with how younger viewers consume content, thanks in part to her background as a content creator on YouTube, where she shares beauty tips.



**Camille Thelemaque-Bearden**  
Director, Marketing,  
Partnerships and Local  
Ad Sales, **TV One**

Thelemaque-Bearden is a seasoned marketing professional whose career spans dynamic roles where she has demonstrated expertise in integrated brand partnership strategy and executive-level activations. Her track record reflects her adeptness at relationship building, strategic planning and fostering cross-functional collaboration. Her proficiency in storytelling and cultural relevance underscores her ability to deliver impactful marketing solutions. She executes partnership marketing strategies across digital, retail and in-market platforms. That includes this year’s launch of UPLIFT, a multi-market digital equity partnership with Comcast that provides visibility and support resources to advance economic mobility in Comcast-identified communities; and last year’s “Black to School Campaign,” a cross-platform, multi-market retail partnership with Verizon in urban markets. She was also behind “Cocktails & Conversations: Bosses Don’t Code Switch (Bosses),” an in-market activation with distribution partner Spectrum; and *Thank You Black Women* and *Hey Black America*, short-form content series developed to support affiliate pro-social efforts at the height of the pandemic.



**John Weinand**  
IT Supervisor, **Mediacom  
Communications**

What makes Weinand stand out is his ability to overcome obstacles.

Born deaf, he has made steady progress in forging a career with cable operator Mediacom, joining his uncle Rocco B. Commisso, the company’s founder, and his mother, executive VP of programming and HR Italia Commisso Weinand, in moving the corporation into the 21st century. His involvement began with summer internships in high school, which grew to a full-time position after college. As an IT supervisor, Weinand focuses on Mediacom’s evolving technology needs as it adapts to meet the challenges of today’s digital landscape. He serves on the team developing 5G/0G community and business services that are expected to improve the vital health, economic and educational sectors in the underserved communities where Mediacom does business. His communication skills make Weinand a shining example to others that no matter your disability, dedication and commitment are the keys to success.



**Fethi Ziyadeoğlu**  
Senior Director,  
Programmatic Sales  
Development, **Fubo**

Ziyadeoğlu was one of Fubo’s first employees dedicated solely to ad operations. He built a team of talented ad ops and ad tech experts and under his oversight, the team was able to successfully fulfill nearly all of the campaigns they managed throughout the year. Ziyadeoğlu has also been instrumental in optimizing Fubo’s programmatic advertising technology, and has helped the MVPD to seamlessly integrate with a new ad server, enabling it to build ad-serving tech internally and to optimize demand and other KPIs. His improvements to Fubo’s ad tech stack also made the company’s ad inventory available to a greater number of advertisers simultaneously. Ziyadeoğlu is also responsible for overseeing many programmatic advertising partnerships across the industry. He launched with new partners in Canada, a growing region for Fubo. After two years of optimizing Fubo’s ad operations, he was promoted to a new role overseeing the company’s programmatic ad-sales efforts. ●

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**John G. Weinand**  
IT Supervisor  
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# SCRIPPS' BID TO CHANGE LOCAL NEWS MOVES AHEAD, DESPITE SPEEDBUMPS

More reporters may make news better, but will it be good for business?



By Jon Lafayette  
jon.lafayette@futurenet.com  
@jlafayette

In her first job in television news, Maya Sargent, a multimedia journalist for E.W. Scripps' WTXL, is covering a neighborhood in Northwest Tallahassee.

Originally from the U.K., Sargent said her British accent has endeared to the Floridians she now lives with and reports on and makes them more inclined to talk to her.

"It's been great to kind of learn more about my neighborhood through the lens of my neighbors," Sargent told B+C Multichannel News. "They're telling you what's important

to them, what they want to hear."

From a message on Facebook, she learned that the food pantry at the local Veterans Village for homeless former servicemen was empty. Sargent did a story on that for the station.

A few days later, she got an email from a teacher in a school on the other side of town.

"They said they were so moved by the story," Sargent said. The elementary school held a food drive and delivered what it collected to the Veterans Village. Sargent did a follow-up story.

"To call attention to a problem and have a viewer react and encourage a whole school to do a food drive then deliver that food to fill the pantry was the most unbelievable display of what

**WTXL multimedia journalist Maya Sargent is embedded in a neighborhood in Northwest Tallahassee, Florida.**

local news can do," she said.

That's the ideal for Scripps, which launched the Neighborhood News format at many of its stations as part of its news initiative a year ago.

## More Reporters in the Field

Scripps said it will have added 250 journalists in its local newsrooms by the end of the year, a 67% increase. In smaller markets, stations will have at least 10 reporters, and in larger markets, stations will have at least 25 journalists in the field.

The company has spent \$11.4 million to increase the pay of its newsgathering employees, especially in small and mid-sized markets.

Scripps CEO Adam Symson, who began his career as a journalist, recently said in a note to staffers that he was "exceptionally proud" of the news being produced from the Scripps stations that have transitioned to the new system.

"In our smaller markets through the Neighborhood News strategy, we're covering more of the community with far more reporters than in the past," he said. "In our medium and larger markets, the new staffing structure is opening the opportunity to cover markets farther and wider, from the rural edges and far-flung suburbs to a city's core. We are rebuilding trust with our audiences because we are committed to covering their community all the time and not just occasionally parachuting in.

"Now a year in, and with most of our local stations transitioned or having started their transition, by focusing on both quality journalism and financial performance, we are creating a stronger

foundation for our future to serve our communities with local news for years to come,” Symson said.

They say you have to break a lot of eggs to make an omelet, and former Scripps executives say the new approach is producing lower ratings and adding to the company’s difficult financial condition.

Sources also said the initiative created a struggle within Scripps between those pushing the new approach and an old guard more interested in next month’s ratings and revenue than the future of TV news.

“There’s a struggle inside the company about how you get there and treat people respectfully,” said one former Scripps exec. “It was very much top down the way it was communicated and some if it didn’t happen the way they said it would happen.”

The struggle was intensified as Scripps went through a corporate reorganization that resulted in senior executives leaving the company and the replacement of general managers at many stations with station managers, reporting to regional managers.

Even within stations, there were jealousies as some staffers got raises, well-paid reporters were added and others saw their income stagnate or their jobs disappear altogether, the executives said.

Many of Scripps’s stations no longer rely on anchors and big chunks of their newscasts — other than weather — are prerecorded. When news breaks, Scripps said, its reporters can and do still report live.

A Scripps spokesman acknowledged that between the company’s reorganization and the news initiative, communication could have been better.

### Business Worries

Former Scripps executives also said some station managers are concerned the initiative will hurt ratings and revenues — especially in 2025, when bigger stations make the change and political advertising dries up



**KERO Bakersfield, Calif., senior reporter Veronica Morley covers her hometown under the “Neighborhood News” format.**

**E.W. Scripps CEO Adam Symson has helped drive the station group’s new strategy.**



in a nonelection year. While viewers tell researchers they prefer softer community news, the executives said, they really want to know about the shootings, fires and other disasters in their neighborhoods.

In Tallahassee, Florida, one of the first markets where the initiative was installed, viewership fell sharply in the second quarter from a year ago, according to Comscore numbers. (Scripps uses Comscore for local audience measurement.)

Scripps noted that Comscore changed its methodology, making apples-to-apples comparisons difficult. Even given that, the leading station in the market saw a much smaller percentage decline in viewership.

Meanwhile, Scripps reported a second-quarter loss and is going through a second management shake-up, all of which has contributed to a big drop in the company’s stock price, which hasn’t enhanced faith in the company’s management.

As far as news is concerned, Sean McLaughlin, a 10-year Scripps vet who was senior VP, local news, before leaving earlier this year, agrees that change is due.

“At the end of the day, I think it’s pretty clear, no matter what sort of audience data you look at that local news needs serious reform,” said McLaughlin, now VP of news at Graham Media Group.

“I’ll tell you, it’s not easy,” he added. “Within the industry, there’s a lot of tension between the reformers, the people who realize we need to drastically change the way we’re operating, and people who are clinging to a past that doesn’t exist anymore. That tension is what prevents real transformation from happening.”

Graham had a similar effort to modernize its news, improve its journalism and produce more stories underway when McLaughlin arrived at the company, he said.

“Any of the journalism-focused broadcasters that are left are eyeballing the same thing,” he said.

The issues at Graham and Scripps are not exactly the same. “Graham is in a different financial situation, so there’s not as much pressure on cutting costs,” McLaughlin said. “And so what it’s really allowed us to do is singularly focus on improving the quality of the news product and not having to simultaneously deal with the financial side.”

Scripps is moving forward with its local news initiative.

If TV is going to continue to inform viewers about their world, Scripps president of news Kate O’Brian said, it can’t become a victim of the financial and technological changes the industry is going through.



“Local news is just an institution like a battleship,” O’Brian said. “It’s going to be really hard to turn around. Where people lost their jobs, the reinvestment of the money saved went into expanding the number of journalists on the street.”

Some stations have cut ties with long-time anchors, but O’Brian said eliminating those big salaries to hire more less-experienced staffers isn’t the Scripps strategy.

“The model is utilizing a lot of levers in order to bring in more reporters,” she said. “And that’s including using technology in a different way and reformatting what the newsrooms look like.”

And while O’Brian said she was sorry for those in newsrooms who’ve left the company, “we also appreciate the people who understand what we’re trying to do.”

At this point 35 stations have made the transition, starting with those in smaller markets. Scripps’ bigger stations started the process in August and the company expects it to be wrapped up in the fourth quarter.

Of those, 12 have chosen the Neighborhood News format.

Other stations have adopted formats including “Fight for What’s Right” and “We Follow Through,” which emphasizes staying with a story.

One of the first stations to make the transition was WTXL Tallahassee. Station manager Vicki Bradley said when she’s fully staffed, she’ll have 12 MMJs in her newsroom, a number she’d never experienced in a small market.

“In a lot of small markets, here are some places in your DMA you never get to because you never had the people,” she said.

The second largest city in the Tallahassee DMA is Valdosta, Georgia, two and half hours from the station. As part of the initiative, WTXL was able to hire a reporter from the Valdosta newspaper, whose family was from the area and went to college there.

“The beauty of hiring people that live in the community they serve is they want to stay,” Bradley said. “My desire is that my Valdosta reporter will want to stay because we do pay people a living wage.”

The station’s new salary structure means she can compete for talent in midsized markets. WTXL recently was able to hire a senior reporter from Charlotte, Bradley said.

Bradley said viewers are noticing the station’s reporters showing up and sticking around in their neighborhoods.

She was at a meeting of community leaders and people would come up to her and drop the names of the station’s reporters — something that hadn’t happened in the past. “This is crazy impactful,” she said.

More reporters in the newsroom creates a need for more management. That’s led to additional training and the creation of executive reporters, who help coach less-experienced MMJs.

At KERO, Scripps’s station in Bakersfield, California, Mike Hart, an anchor

**WTXL Tallahassee was one of the first markets to launch Neighborhood News, which favors more reporting muscle over high-priced actors.**

for 30 years, has become an executive reporter, overseeing the newsroom’s 12 MMJs, teaching them about what’s a story and how to report and write it.

“We’re a small market in size, but we’re in the second largest county in California,” he said. “This Neighborhood News model now sends our reporters into every corner of the county. They cover stories that we might not have covered even a year or two ago,” when the station had more anchors than reporters.

### More Local, Less Live

Besides having more reporters, the station’s Neighborhood News format features fewer unnecessary live shots. “It makes us so much more efficient and it gives our reporters the ability to really spend more time putting their stories together,” Hart said, like a recent investigation into a rise of arson cases in the market.

In an industry where most news staffers move from market to market, Hart says he landed in Bakersfield and has now spent 33 years there. “People ask me where I’m from and I say I’m from Bakersfield,” he said.

At KERO, he’s been through a number of formats, from Action News to Standing Up for You. He said he hopes that Scripps’s initiative will encourage more people to stay in market — especially if that’s where they grew up.

KERO senior reporter Veronica Morley was born and raised in Bakersfield and has the talent to move up to a larger market, Hart said. “She has told me she wants to stay in Bakersfield. This is her home.”

Another KERO reporter, Corey O’Leary, lives in a little town called Bodfish. When storms hit the area, “having someone embedded up there where it was all happening was a tremendous advantage,” Hart said.

Hart hopes some of his younger MMJs will stick around.

“We’re going to see other companies follow us,” he said. “We’re already seeing it in our market. Two of the other stations are trying to imitate some of the things we’re doing.” ●

**“Local news is just an institution like a battleship,” says Scripps president of news Kate O’Brian.**



# Reviews! How Some Soon-to-Debut Shows Hold Up

## NBC's 'St. Denis Medical' Finds Laughs in a Most Unlikely Place



By Michael Malone  
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**S**t. Denis Medical is a comedy set at an underfunded hospital in Oregon. Created by Justin Spitzer and Eric Ledgin, the show features a mockumentary format. The cast includes Wendi McLendon-Covey, David Alan Grier, Allison Tolman and Josh Lawson.

The pilot sees Tolman's Alex, a supervising nurse, aiming to get out of work — after her shift ends — to see her daughter in a school play. But those who work with her know that when a crisis hits the hospital — which seems to be about every day — Alex is the last one to leave.

"A workaholic control freak," is how ER doc Ron, played by Grier, describes her.

This crisis went down because the hospital's clueless boss, Joyce, played by McLendon-Covey of *The Goldbergs*, acquires a 3D mammography machine that St. Denis can ill afford and which crashed the hospital's system. McLendon-Covey plays the part deftly, but we've seen the clueless boss in many, many comedies before, be it *The Office* or

*American Auto*, both of which Spitzer worked on.

Alex drives the plot in the pilot. We loved Tolman in season one of *Fargo*, and we like her in this as well. Few actors can express as much through facial expression alone.

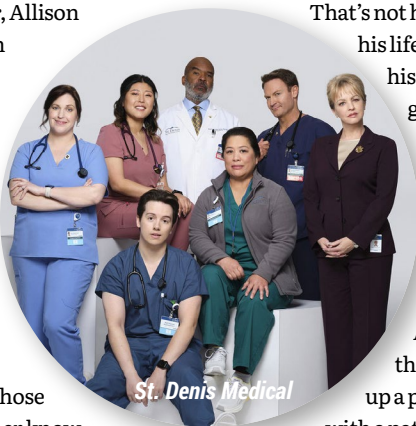
Matthew, a new nurse who lacks any hint of nursing skills, carries the second episode. Played by Mekki Leeper, Matthew grew up in an extremely religious household.

That's not how he's living his life these days, but his God background is strong enough to notice the hospital's interfaith chaplain isn't up to snuff.

After seeing the chaplain mess up a parable he shares with a patient, Matthew tells the camera, "I learned this stuff when I was 7. In a coloring book!"

The second episode breaks down the battle between superstition and science, with Dr. Ron in full voice of science. To prove his point, he puts a hex on the hospital, and a lot of bad stuff starts happening. Examining a patient's horrific snakebite, surgeon Bruce, played by Lawson, exclaims, "That was one snake?"

*St. Denis Medical* offers some laughs, but viewers may find they're drawn to a few of the nuanced characters more than the guffaws. ●



St. Denis Medical



Manu Bennett hosts CBS competition series *The Summit*

## CBS'S 'THE SUMMIT' SEES 16 CONTESTANTS TAKE ON MOUNTAIN IN NEW ZEALAND

**THE SUMMIT** IS a competition series set in New Zealand, where 16 Americans have 14 days to climb a mountain, which includes a 100-mile hike. Each contestant has one-sixteenth of \$1 million in their backpack. If one leaves for a medical reason, their share of the cash disappears. If they are voted out, it is divided up among the remaining contestants.

"It will be the ultimate test of their character and courage," host Manu Bennett said.

The scenery is breathtaking (the ubiquitous mountain seems all too fitting for a show on a Paramount Global network), and the contestants offer some intriguing individuals, including Jennye, a mixed martial arts referee; Therron, a waiter; and Rose, a stay-at-home mother with a background she does not reveal to her colleagues — flying a helicopter in combat.

"I used to be a badass, and I'm looking to find that again in myself here," she shares.

One challenge sees two contestants at a time cross a scary rope bridge high above the rocky ground, though the tension is alleviated a bit in that they are affixed to ropes that will prevent an injurious fall.

The bridge crossing sees one

contestant the odd one out after everyone else has gone, and the rest of the group must vote to leave them there, and save some time, or figure out a way to get them over to their side, and perhaps delay their arrival at the next camp.

Nine checkpoint camps are set up along the way, and if the group moves too slowly to make one, they sleep in "bivy camps" — sleeping bags, drinking from the creek, eating freeze-dried food. The arrangements at the checkpoint camps, including tents and wine, are far more inviting.

But each checkpoint camp also features a vote, which sees the loser sent home, and their cash divided up. Unlike on *Survivor*, where ballots are stealthily slipped into an urn during tribal council, voting is a show of hands out in the open.

Is *The Summit* worth watching? It might be. A handful of contestants reveals themselves early on to be entertaining to watch. Host Bennett, an actor, is gruff, and the pilot does not reveal much of his personality other than no-nonsense.

And while the *Summit* format borrows from other competition series, the presence of lots of cash on each contestant as they hike makes for a unique dynamic. — MM



# Women Fighters Are Packing a Punch on TV

Once considered a novelty, ring sports involving female combatants are gaining new acceptance, popularity



By R. Thomas Umstead  
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Women pro combat-sports fighters are punching their way to the top of high-profile pay-per-view and televised fight cards as the familiarity of top female athletes in boxing and mixed martial arts, along with the quality of their fights, clicks

with both distributors and fans.

Once considered a novelty, industry observers said female fighters are now garnering an unprecedented level of acceptance and respect. “Women fighters used to be a big joke, but now people look at them and say they actually can fight,” said Tony Paige, a former boxing broadcaster and sports-talk host on WFAN New York. “No one’s running to the fridge anymore because a women’s fight is on TV.”

Women have been in the boxing game for decades, with such names as Laila Ali,

**Katie Taylor (l.) and Amanda Serrano at the press conference for their November fight on the undercard of Netflix’s Mike Tyson-Jake Paul event.**

Christy Martin and Jacqui Frazier-Lyde bringing attention to female fisticuffs back in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Martin’s 1996 bout against Deirdre Gogarty was among the first women’s bouts to appear on a major PPV telecast as an undercard fight to Mike Tyson-Frank Bruno. Ali and Frazier-Lyde, the daughters of Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier, respectively, fought in 2001 in what is considered to be the first PPV event headlined by a women’s boxing match, according to ESPN.

Paige, who currently writes sports



stories for the *New York Daily News*, said back then there weren't enough good women fighters to keep female boxing competitive and interesting. Also, past and current critics of female boxing point to the specialized rules set for participants — including 2-minute rounds compared to 3 minutes for men's matches, as well as larger glove sizes for women — as a detriment to putting women fighters on par with male boxers.

Today's crop of female boxers are plentiful, talented, and not afraid to fight each other in very competitive matchups, Paige said.

### Taylor-Serrano Stirs Interest

Indeed, Netflix will stream one of the biggest bouts of the year between Katie Taylor and Amanda Serrano as a co-main event on its November 15 Jake Paul-Mike Tyson card. Taylor and Serrano's 2022 fight, streamed by DAZN, was the first ever to feature women headliners at New York's Madison Square Garden. Taylor's split decision win over Serrano was named *Sports Illustrated's* 2022 fight of the year.

This past July, multiple world women's boxing champion Claressa Shields headlined a DAZN pay-per-view boxing telecast as she defeated Vanessa Lepage-Joanisse to win the women's heavyweight title.

DAZN has put female fighters at the forefront of its boxing cards for years, according to VP of marketing Alfie Sharman. He would not provide specific PPV numbers for Shields Lepage-Joanisse event but said it surpassed purchase expectations.

"If you put two people at the top of their game in any field, even if you've never heard of them, you'd be hard-pressed not to be impressed by them," Sharman said. "The more these talented athletes want to fight at the top level, the more the consumer is going to enjoy it irrespective of gender because at the end of the day, it's good, quality action."

Women fighters are also fighting on major UFC mixed martial arts PPV and televised events. This past July, ESPN's *UFC Fight Night* featured as its main event a women's strawweight bout between Amanda Lemos and Virna Jandiroba,

one of four female-led cards the network televised this year.

Female fighters have appeared on UFC PPV and in televised events since 2013 when Ronda Rousey fought Liz Carmouche in the first-ever women's UFC fight.

UFC's *The Ultimate Fighter* has also prominently featured women. The recently completed 32nd season of the ESPN Plus-distributed reality show, where 16 male and female prospects fight in an elimination tournament, was coached by UFC stars Alexa Grasso and Valentina Shevchenko.

The show's 30th season also featured two female fighter coaches in Julianna Pena and Amanda Nunes.

Other female fighters such as Professional Fighters League (PFL)-owned Bellator women's featherweight champion

bullish on with respect to the category."

Women fighters are scheduled to appear in several high-profile events through the fall. Along with Netflix's November Taylor-Serrano boxing match, ESPN's September 27 fight card will feature as its main event a bout between welterweight champion Sandy Ryan and Mikaela Mayer.

In the octagon, UFC flyweight champion Grasso will defend her belt against Shevchenko as part of the highly-anticipated September 14 UFC 306 in Las Vegas. Also, Bellator's Cyborg is set to co-headline an October PFL PPV fight card.

It's inevitable more women combat athletes will gain exposure from marquee televised events, according to Kenny. "The beauty about combat sports is there's no shortage of compelling storylines, so there's really no ceiling," he said. "The women's division continues to be a prominent aspect of the UFC and we've had a number of PPV events on our platforms that have featured women athletes, including Amanda Nunes and Claressa Shields. For us, it's about covering and celebrating the absolute best in the sport."

### Popularity Outside the Ring

The growing interest in female combat sports athletes can also be seen on screens big and small. Movies like Netflix's 2021 Halle Berry starrer *Bruised* and documentaries like HBO's 2024 *The Unbreakable Tatiana Suarez* have chronicled the lives of both fictional and true-life fighters.

This December, MGM's film *The Fire Inside* will follow boxing champion Shields' life through her difficult childhood to her eventual gold medal-winning performance in the 2012 Summer Olympics. Shields would also win gold in 2016.

The growing interest in all women's sports, including the WNBA, softball and soccer, has helped lift the profile of women combat sports beyond the ring and octagon, said Mark Taffet, Shields' promoter.

"The values of society have changed and progressed, and that has created opportunities for these talented athletes to excel within the sports and entertainment space," Taffet, a former HBO Sports executive, said. ●



**The Amanda Lemos-Virna Jandiroba bout headlined July's UFC Fight Night event.**

Cris Cyborg and UFC fighter/two-time Olympic gold medalist Kayla Harrison are also advancing the awareness and appeal of women's combat sports.

ESPN VP of acquisitions Matt Kenny said shows like *The Ultimate Fighter* as well as live, televised fight cards that feature marquee female fighters tend to draw both hard core fans and casual viewers — including women — to the sport.

"Those events featuring female athletes have the ability to cut through the clutter, whether you're a diehard mixed martial arts fan or not, so we know that it's going to attract a huge audience," Kenny said. "We know that combat sports also skews younger, so there's so much that we're

# California's Capital Is a Vast and Varied Market

Sacramento-Stockton-Modesto offers influential city with tons of news, and a different vibe outside the capital



By Michael Malone  
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There's long been a clear market leader in Sacramento-Stockton-Modesto, California, but KCRA's rivals are trying a number of things to poach ratings points. That includes a new 10 p.m. weeknight newscast on independent KMAX and rookie 12 p.m. regional newscasts on the two Spanish-language entrants, KNTV and KUVS.

But KCRA won't be knocked off its sky-high perch any time soon. Ariel Roblin, president and general manager, said it all comes down to the people who work there. "People talk about how they watch KCRA, and they say, 'These are great people who care about their

community, and their coverage is heartfelt,'" she said.

Hearst Television owns NBC affiliate KCRA and KQCA. Known as My58, KQCA became The CW's Sacramento affiliate on September 1, 2023. CBS News and Stations has KOVR and KMAX; the latter had been the CW station. Tegna holds ABC outlet KXTV and Nexstar Media Group owns the Fox affiliate, KTXL.

Univision owns KUVS, known as Univision 19, and KTFK, while NBCUniversal Local has the Telemundo station KCSO, known as Telemundo 33, and KNSO.

Comcast is the major pay TV operator in DMA No. 20.

KCRA has some other advantages, including the only station helicopter in the market. That is key in a vast DMA that spans over 20,000 square miles, according to Roblin, especially when

there's a wildfire happening, such as the Park Fire raging this summer north of Sacramento.

The Hearst station was a beast in May. KCRA easily won the 6 a.m. race in households and viewers 25-54, as well as the 5 and 6 p.m. battles in both groups, with KOVR the runner-up.

KMAX beat KQCA and KTXL in the 10 p.m. newscast race, and KCRA won both races at 11. In households, KCRA had 43% of household viewing, KOVR 29%, KXTV and KUVS 10% and KTXL 8%. In viewers 25-54, KCRA had 44%, KOVR 32%, KXTV and KUVS 10%, and KTXL 4%.

Sacramento is the California capital, which means government is a giant economic driver. Agriculture is substantial as well — the GMs here often echo the region's "farm to fork" motif — as are the military and the medical industry.

The general managers said the local economy ranges from lukewarm to a little cooler these days. "There are challenges," said Chris Morris, regional president and general manager, KUVS-KTFK. "We'd be crazy to think there aren't."

## 8 P.M. Weekday News

Stations are hustling to get ahead. When KMAX went independent late last year, Deborah Collura, KOVR-KMAX president and general manager, wondered how to fill the two prime hours per night. She could not recall Sacramento ever having an 8 p.m. weeknight newscast, and decided to give it a shot. Launching in September with Tony Lopez anchoring, *Primetime Sacramento* is "a new, fresh, contemporary show with

**KCRA's 11 p.m. anchors Gulstan Dart and Edie Lambert deliver the news from the California capital.**



new franchise pieces,” she said.

It came out of the gate “gangbusters,” Collura added, doubling ratings over its predecessors in the 8 p.m. slot.

KOVR also debuted an initiative that sees eight multimedia journalists embedded in counties within the DMA, and ones that may not have been getting stations’ full attention before. Launching six months ago, the Community Journalism project “gives voice to the communities that are traditionally underserved,” Collura said.

KOVR got pointers from what CBS News and Stations cousin KCNC Denver had done with reporters living and working in specific parts of the market. “It’s working out great,” Collura said. “We get tips from viewers inside those counties, who tell us, you haven’t been telling our stories in the past, and we’re so glad you’re here. And they’re giving us stories.”

KOVR has a vital source in covering the Park Fire. Chief meteorologist Nick Merianos’s background includes both firefighting and flying airplanes.

KXTV, where the branding is We Stand For You, has brought back its “10 On Your Side” franchise, which had been sidelined for years. Chris Thomas fronts the segments, which have focused on energy bills skyrocketing, a charter school with a lavish budget, and how California’s Department of Developmental Services may be failing people with disabilities, among other community issues.

“It helps viewers with issues that are not being addressed by companies and government agencies,” explained Risa Omega, KXTV president and general manager. “In a short amount of time, we’ve had a lot of impact. We’re getting an overwhelming response from the community.”

KXTV recently launched *Take a Look*, a weekly program hosted by entertainment reporter Marcus S. Allen that features celebrity interviews, movie reviews and entertainment news. The show airs 9:30 a.m. Fridays.

*To the Point With Alex Bell* is on week-

nights at 6:30 p.m. “We go beyond the headlines and take deeper dives into the issues that affect our communities,” be it homelessness, climate change or water resources, Omega said.

### New News at Noon

The Spanish-language stations pay special attention to Stockton and Modesto, where a large number of their viewers live and work. Stacy Owen, president and general manager of KCSO-KNSO, along with KNTV-KSTS San Francisco, called them “very big, vibrant cities on their own.”

KUVS launched its noon newscast July 15. It is produced in Sacramento,



**Hunter Sowards, anchor and reporter, covers a story for KOVR Sacramento.**

with stations in the Bay Area, Fresno and Bakersfield pitching in.

“It has been extremely well received,” Morris said. “It’s not your typical hard news. It is very community-driven, very locally-driven, very digitally-focused.”

In addition to the noon newscast, KUVS, with Contigo (With You) branding, features weekday news 6-7 a.m., 6 and 11 p.m. weekdays, along with Sundays 6 and 11 p.m.

A key figure in covering state news is Roxanna Calderon, KUVS director of community empowerment. “She covers not only the capital, but the community leaders and influencers,” Morris said. “We make sure we provide a platform for them, from a non-partisan standpoint, to communicate with.”

KCSO’s noon news began in November and is a partnership between

stations in Sacramento, the Bay Area and Fresno. KCSO offers weekday news 5, 5:30, 6 and 11 p.m.

Owen said everyone in the newsroom hustles to live up to the Sacramento stations’ Working For You (Trabajando Para Ti) branding. “We’re really leaning into the responsibility we have in this marketplace,” said Owen. “Our viewers literally feed the Central Valley, put roofs in, put ACs in.”

Candy Duran came on as KCSO news director in April. She’d been an executive producer at Univision’s KFTV Fresno, and began her career in local TV as an intern at KSTS San Francisco. “She has real central Valley roots, so she understands our market,” said Owen.

KCSO is a partner at the California state fair, and delivered the 5:30 news from the fair one day this summer.

### Farm to Fork

Those working in Sacramento-Stockton-Modesto love the farm-to-fork dining scene, the diversity and the access to the Bay Area and Lake Tahoe (San Francisco is roughly 90 miles southwest of Sacramento.) Many look forward to the Oakland A’s moving to Sacramento for the 2025-2027 seasons ahead of an intended move to Las Vegas.

Collura describes herself as “a Midwest girl at heart,” and feels a similar vibe in the California capital. “Sacramento feels like it has the same Midwest sensibility as Chicago,” she said. “There’s a down to earth feeling here. People are real, they are authentic, they are very proud.”

The market is very unique in that four of the general managers are female. “We’re definitely hard-core competitors, but at the end of the day, we have a lot in common,” Roblin said. “It’s been a great experience.”

Omega noted the “mutual respect” among the female GMs as they battle every day. “I love that we are definitely competitive as local broadcasters,” she said. “As women in leadership roles, we bring a unique perspective to our stations.” ●

# People

## Notable executives on the move



### ABC NEWS

ABC News political director **Rick Klein** has been named VP and Washington bureau chief. Klein, who joined the network's news division in 2007, will oversee bureau operations and manage all of the division's news teams based in Washington, D.C.



### ACCUWEATHER

**Matt Gillis** has joined AccuWeather as chief business officer. He most recently was president of Digital Turbine, where he handled go-to-market efforts including sales, marketing, business development and operations.



### ANTHEM

Anthem Sports & Entertainment has tapped **Brian Doherty** as president of ad sales for AXS TV and HDNet Movies. Doherty was executive VP of multi-platform advertising sales for Nexstar Media Group and its national properties, including The CW, NewsNation and The Hill.



### ASTOUND

**Toni Murphy** has joined Astound Broadband in Princeton, New Jersey, as executive VP and chief operating officer. The 20-year cable and telecom most recently was chief marketing officer and senior VP, sales and marketing in Comcast's Atlanta-based Central Division.



### CBS NEWS AND STATIONS

CBS News and Stations has elevated **Jennifer Lyons** to regional general manager and president of WBBM Chicago and WWJ Detroit. Lyons was president and GM of WBBM and had been interim GM of WWJ since Brian Watson left the company in May.



### CBS NEWS AND STATIONS

CBS News and Stations has named **Kennan Oliphant** as VP of news and station manager at WWJ Detroit, reporting to regional GM Jennifer Lyons. He comes from WXYZ-WMYD Detroit, where he had been senior director of news.



### COMCAST

**Lance West** has joined Comcast as executive VP, federal government affairs and head of its Washington, D.C., office. Most recently VP of federal government relations at the American Petroleum Institute, he was chief of staff to U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.).



### ELF LABS

**Alyse Rosenberg** was named senior VP of content at Elf Labs, a kids content studio that launched in April. She created, wrote, directed and executive produced such series as *Ready or Not* for Disney Channel, *Braceface* for ABC Family and *Little Bear* for Nickelodeon.



### FETV

Family Entertainment Television, owner of FETV and Family Movie Classics, has hired **Christine Carbia** as VP of national sales, based in New York. She joins FETV with almost 25 years of experience at companies such as USA Network, Syfy, Fox and E.W. Scripps Co.



### MPA

**Larissa Knapp** has joined the Motion Picture Association as executive VP and chief content protection officer, responsible for anti-piracy efforts, including the Alliance for Creativity and Entertainment. She had led the FBI's Security, Training and Human Resources Divisions.



**NCTC**

**Phil Spencer** was named to the board of directors of the Lenexa, Kansas-based National Content & Technology Cooperative (NCTC). He most recently was CEO of Vyvve Broadband and had been serving as a board member and adviser to that company.



**SCRIPPS**

E.W. Scripps has named **Charlie Grisham** VP and general manager of ABC affiliate WRTV Indianapolis. He joins Scripps from Allen Media Group-owned ABC station WSIL Carterville, Illinois, where he had been VP and general manager since 2019.



**OPB**

**Rachel Smolkin** has been named president and CEO of Oregon Public Broadcasting, effective this month upon the retirement of CEO Steve Bass. She comes from CNN in Washington, D.C., where she was senior VP of global news for CNN News Digital.



**SINCLAIR**

Sinclair has named **Dean Ditmer** VP and general manager of KATU-KUNP in Portland, Oregon, succeeding the retired Cortlandt Cuffee. He comes from KPNX-KSMB-KTTU in Tuscon, Arizona, where he was president and general manager.



**NIELSEN**

**Akhil Parekh** was named chief solutions officer of digital product at Nielsen, a new post. He was previously executive VP, managing director at ad agency Publicis Groupe, where he was responsible for building a media platform for agency planners and buyers.



**TELLY**

**Mike Shehan** has joined Telly, the company that offers free TVs to consumers in exchange for their viewing data, as the company's first chief revenue officer. He is the co-founder and was CEO of video advertising and monetization platform SpotX.



**NEP**

Media services firm NEP Group has added **Sandy Case** to its Creative Technology Group as London-based senior VP of sport, tasked with growing its global sports business. He had been CEO of iSportConnect, a private network of sports executives.



**WLS CHICAGO**

ABC-owned WLS Chicago has elevated **Doug Whitmire** to VP of news, succeeding the retiring Jennifer Graves. Formerly assistant news director, Whitmire joined the station in 2003 as a newswriter/producer and was promoted to his prior role in 2021.

**BRIEFLY NOTED**

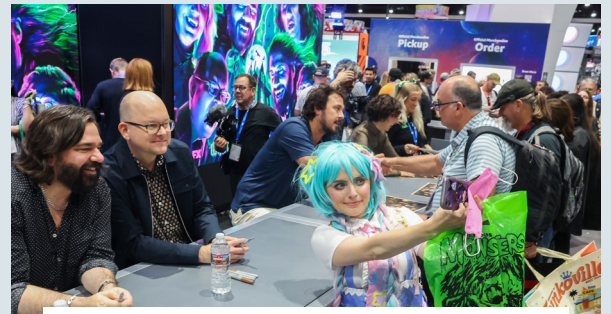
*Other industry execs making moves*

Former WarnerMedia executive **Tony Goncalves** has joined measurement company Mediaprobe as an adviser. He also recently started The Evrose Group, an advisory firm. ... Nexstar Media Group has promoted **Olivia Pennington** and **Britt Milstead** to VP and general manager. Pennington will run WHNT and WHDF in Huntsville, Alabama; Milstead will manage KLBK Lubbock, Texas, and oversee Nexstar's agreement to operate Mission Broadcasting-owned KAMC Lubbock. ... TelevisaUnivision has named **Juan Pablo Newman** as interim chief financial officer, with CFO Carlos Ferreiro stepping away from his role for health reasons. Newman had been chief growth officer of TelevisaUnivision Mexico. ... Streaming technology provider Zone-tv has elevated **Doug Edwards** to president. He had been chief product and technology officer.

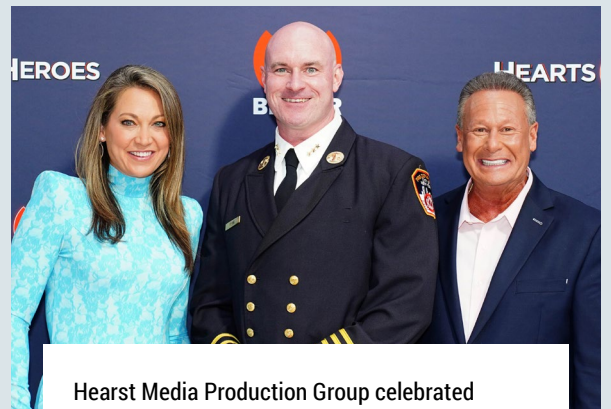
*For more personnel news from the TV, video and connectivity business, go to [nexttv.com/fates-and-fortunes](http://nexttv.com/fates-and-fortunes).*



Creators and cast members from Netflix's *Queer Eye* visited the White House to commemorate 20 years of the series (l. to r.): **Carson Kressley, Jai Rodriguez, Michael Williams, Vice President Kamala Harris, Karamo Brown, Jonathan Van Ness and David Collins.**



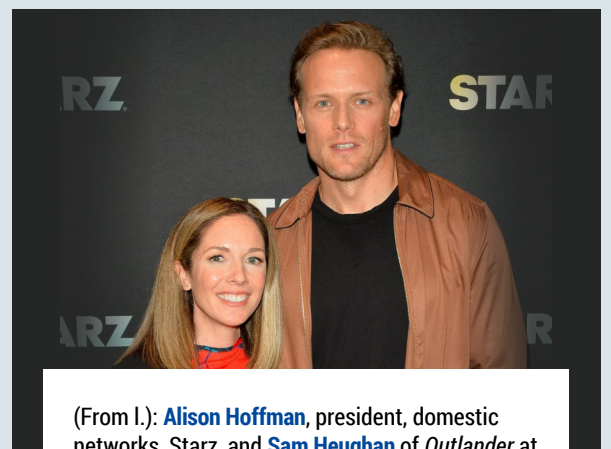
**Matt Berry (l.) and Mark Proksch** of FX's *What We Do in the Shadows* take a selfie with a fan during a July 25 signing at San Diego Comic-Con.



Hearst Media Production Group celebrated Season 6 of *Hearts of Heroes*, a show celebrating first responders airing on ABC stations, with an event at New York's Hearst Tower (from l.): **Ginger Zee**, host; New York City Chief Fire Marshal **Daniel E. Flynn**; and **Sheldon Yellen**, CEO of Belfor and the show's disaster recovery expert.

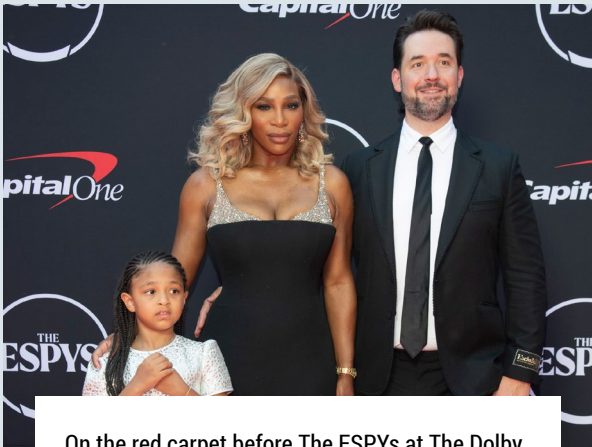


(From l.): Co-creator/showrunner **Ramón Campos, Eva Longoria, Victoria Bazúa, Santiago Cabrera** and co-creator **Gemma R. Neira** at the premiere of Apple TV Plus's *Land of Women* at Whitby Hotel in New York.

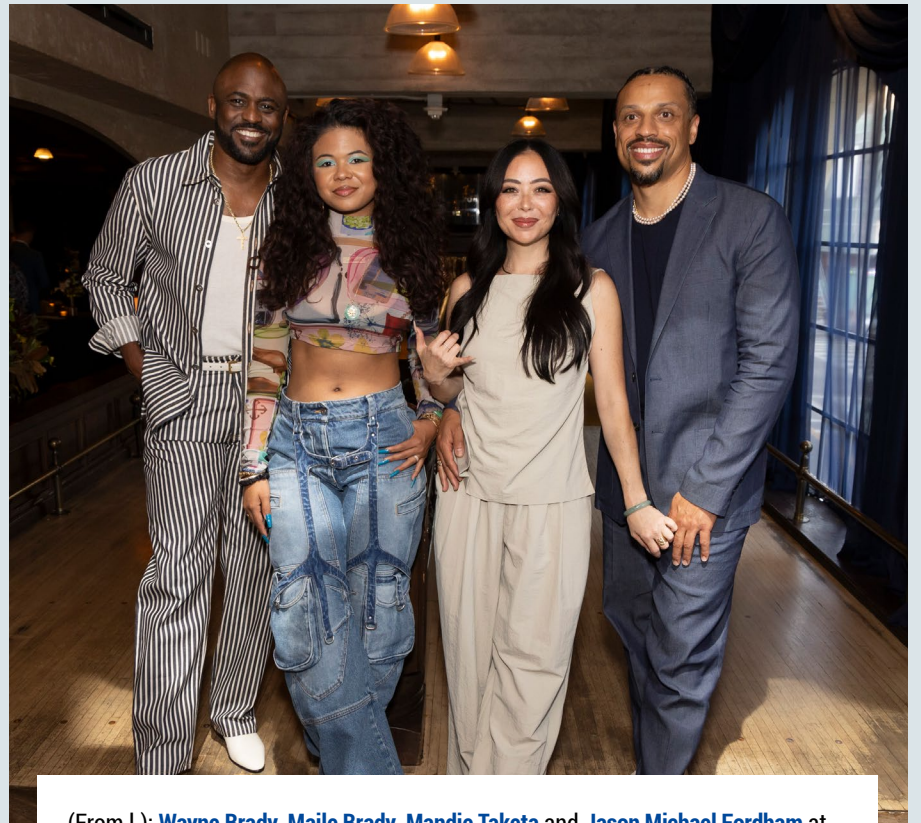


(From l.): **Alison Hoffman**, president, domestic networks, Starz, and **Sam Heughan** of *Outlander* at the Starz Summer TCA Press Tour presentation in Pasadena, California.

Scott Kirkland/PictureGroup for Disney Entertainment Television; Lawrence Jackson/The White House; Bill Davila/Starktraksphoto.com; Jerod Harris/Getty Images for Starz; Marion Curtis/Starpix for Apple TV Plus



On the red carpet before The ESPYs at The Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles (l. to r.): **Alexis Olympia Ohanian**; **Serena Williams**, ESPYs host; and her husband, **Alexis Ohanian**.



(From l.): **Wayne Brady**, **Maile Brady**, **Mandie Taketa** and **Jason Michael Fordham** at Freeform's *Wayne Brady: The Family Remix* game night event in the Spare Room at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel.



**Ismael Cruz Córdova** at a San Diego Comic-Con cast signing session for Prime Video's *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power*.



(From l.): Disney Television Group president **Craig Erwich**; **Ayo Davis**, Disney Branded Television president; and **Charlie Andrews**, EVP, live action and unscripted series, Disney Branded Television, at the Burbank, California, premiere event for *Descendants: Rise of Red*.



(From l.): **Matt Damon**, **Doug Liman**, **Hong Chau** and **Casey Affleck** at the New York premiere of Apple Original Films' *The Instigators* at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

# Ad Meter

Who's spending what where

## BUSY SUMMER GROWS TV-NEWS AD REACH

July's busy news cycle spurs ad-impressions increases for news networks, programs.



Combined CNN, Fox News, MSNBC July household TV ad impressions across all dayparts: **54.73 billion** (+ 22.8% YoY)

Combined CNN, Fox News Channel and MSNBC July TV ad impressions, in primetime only: **9.13 billion** (+ 20.9% YoY)

**Key takeaway:** The Donald Trump assassination attempt, Joe Biden abandoning his reelection bid and the Paris Summer Olympics all fueled a news audience increase and resulting TV ad reach growth. The spike wasn't a result of ad-stuffing, either. CNN, Fox News and MSNBC all reduced ad minutes year-over-year in July.

### CABLE NEWS NETWORKS BY PRIMETIME TV AD IMPRESSIONS

By total household TV ad impressions in July

- 1. Fox News Channel**  
TV ad impressions: **5.41 billion**  
Most-seen brand: **LeafFilter (2.69%)**
- 2. MSNBC**  
TV ad impressions: **2.03 billion**  
Most-seen brand: **Qunol (3.31%)**
- 3. CNN**  
TV ad impressions: **1.69 billion**  
Most-seen brand: **Liberty Mutual (2.51%)**

### TOP BRAND INDUSTRIES ON CABLE NEWS

By household TV ad impressions across CNN, Fox News and MSNBC in July

#### 1 VITAMINS & SUPPLEMENTS

Share of impressions: **5.65%**

Top program: **The Ingraham Angle (6.49%)**

Top daypart: **Primetime (29.92%)**

#### 2 HOUSING & HOME IMPROVEMENT

Share of impressions: **3.75%**

Top program: **Special Report With Bret Baier (6.57%)**

Top daypart: **Primetime (23.23%)**

#### 3 TRAVEL WEBSITES

Share of impressions: **2.44%**

Top program: **Fox & Friends (7.16%)**

Top daypart: **Daytime (27.12%)**

#### 4 WIRELESS SERVICES

Share of impressions: **2.40%**

Top program: **America's Newsroom (7.64%)**

Top daypart: **Early fringe (25.65%)**

#### 5 AUTO & GENERAL INSURANCE

Share of impressions: **2.28%**

Top program: **The Five (7.98%)**

Top daypart: **Early fringe (27.66%)**

### TOP BRANDS DURING NEWS PROGRAMMING

By share of household TV ad impressions during news programming, all networks in July

- 1) Consumer Cellular (1.12%)**
- 2) Progressive (0.94%)**
- 3) The Farmer's Dog (0.93%)**
- 4) Safelite Auto Glass (0.75%)**
- 5) Liberty Mutual (0.74%)**
- 6) Trivago (0.71%)**
- 7) Balance of Nature (0.70%)**
- 8) Angi (0.68%)**
- 9) LeafFilter (0.60%)**
- 10) Chase Credit Card (0.55%)**

### TOP BRAND INDUSTRIES DURING NEWS PROGRAMMING

By share of household TV ad impressions during news programming, all networks in July

- 1) Vitamins & Supplements (4.08%)**
- 2) Auto & General Insurance (2.80%)**
- 3) Wireless Services (3.27%)**
- 4) Home Improvement (2.25%)**
- 5) Skin & Foot Care (2.21%)**
- 6) Pet Food (2.12%)**
- 7) OTC Pain Relief (2.09%)**
- 8) Automakers (1.94%)**
- 9) Cleaning Supplies (1.88%)**
- 10) Oral Care (1.83%)**





By Stuart N. Brotman  
@stuartnbrotman

# The Lingering 'Ed Sullivan Effect' in the Presidential Race

## Harris-Trump battle highlights generational shifts in media and culture

**W**all Street Journal opinion columnist Peggy Noonan, a former speechwriter for President

Ronald Reagan, revealed in a recent piece a powerful media metaphor that may become an important factor in the race between former President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris. Yes, the fate of either candidate in their quest for the presidency may depend on the now-fading memories of a TV host named Ed Sullivan. He's universally remembered, of course, for creating the enduring cultural tsunami of The Beatles performing live on his show for three straight weeks in the winter of 1964.

As Noonan observed, Trump "grew up, as did I, watching *The Ed Sullivan Show*. I'm sure it was on every Sunday night at 8 at the Trump house in Queens. On that show, you saw every week the great Borscht Belt comics of 1950-70. Their timing — 'Take my wife — please!' — is ingrained in him. What he does now is shtick, because he likes to entertain and is a performer."

It's hard to believe, but *The Ed Sullivan Show* on the CBS television network actually signed off in 1971 — over a half-century ago. By then, the show's format and stars seemed like relics



from the earlier days of vaudeville and burlesque.

The parade of comedians such as Henny Youngman, Myron Cohen, Alan King and Totie Fields made our parents and grandparents howl uncontrollably as we watched with them in our living rooms; it was true appointment TV for the entire family. By the time of Ed Sullivan's poignant wave of the hand as the final episode's credits rolled, however, a new breed of comics such as George Carlin and Richard Pryor clearly were emerging as favorites for a younger and hipper generation.

Sullivan also notably had as a show feature a recognition of celebrity guests in the audience, asking them to stand

**Ed Sullivan held big cultural cachet in the era when former President Donald Trump came of age.**

up so they could be recognized with a hearty round of applause. One can easily imagine a portly man in a blue suit and long red tie smiling and putting his thumbs up after the camera panned over after Ed Sullivan shouted his name. "Ladies and Gentlemen, let's welcome noted New York businessman and man about town Donald Trump!"

In its time, *The Ed Sullivan Show* received consistent blockbuster ratings that far exceeded competing series hosted by the likes of Walt Disney and Steve Allen. It prospered for an incredible 23 seasons. But today, the last remaining vestige of Ed Sullivan is the nightly announcement that Stephen Colbert's late-night show is being broadcast from a theater that CBS had named in Sullivan's honor.

In contrast, the Harris campaign seems to have tapped into another zeitgeist entirely. Music outlets, with radio and streaming platforms such as Spotify and Pandora, are more important today in promoting stars who many younger and more diverse voters follow with the same sense of devotion that their elders had for those who appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. As Megan Thee Stallion and Charli XCX begin to show up at Harris campaign rallies and on her social media posts, accompanied by a Beyoncé soundtrack, the stark difference between the personas of the two candidates and their followers now is in full view.

While Trump and Harris compete politically, the battle between intense media experiences then and now seems likely to play an unanticipated role in how many will turn out to vote on Election Day, and who they ultimately select as their candidate of choice. Alas, the ghost of Ed Sullivan may well be a looming presence when people cast their ballots for the 47th president of the United States. ●

Stuart N. Brotman is the former president and CEO of The Museum of Television & Radio in New York and Los Angeles (now the Paley Center for Media).

# Charley Humbard

CEO, UP Entertainment

Founder of faith-forward network reflects on two successful decades

**U**P Entertainment celebrates its 20th anniversary in October with a large footprint for its family-friendly

content across cable (UPtv, which launched in 2004, and Aspire TV), subscription streaming (UP Faith & Family) and free, ad-supported TV (FAST) services (Aspire TV Life). In addition, the brand has recently expanded to include acquisitions GaitherTV Plus, featuring country, gospel, bluegrass and Christian-music content, as well as kids-targeted, Christian-themed SVOD service Minno.

Spearheading UP Entertainment's business operations is CEO Charley Humbard. The cable veteran has steered UPtv to a top-50 Nielsen ranking among cable networks in households thus far in third-quarter 2024 — up 10 spots from the second quarter.

Humbard, the son of late television evangelist Rex Humbard, spoke to B+C Multichannel News senior content producer R. Thomas Umstead about UPtv's successful two decades within the entertainment industry, as well as the continued expansion of the brand across multiple platforms. An edited transcript follows.

**As you approach 20 years at UPtv, how has the brand evolved compared to when you initially launched the service?** While the brand has evolved from music — when it was originally the Gospel Music Channel — to now with general-entertainment

content, it has stayed consistent in the genre of providing uplifting content. As I look back now to where we were then, we have been the creators and definers of uplifting entertainment over the past 20 years of our journey.

**Given today's crowded television environment, is there a place and audience for uplifting, family-friendly entertainment?** I think so, now more than ever. I hate to say it, but the general environment today is supercharged and full of a lot of negativity. People really need a refuge and a place to go and get away from it all and get good stories that inspire them and remind them that faith, family and relationships are still so important. I think that speaks to why we are having the success that we're having in experiencing the greatest growth in revenue and profitability for our services. It's the perfect storm for us right now.

**How do you see AspireTV developing as an outlet for African-American viewers looking for programming catered to them?** We wanted to stay true to what [AspireTV founder] Magic [Johnson] really wanted to establish for the network, which was a place for Black and urban viewers to see themselves in a positive light. We've added lifestyle programming such as cooking and travel to the network's lineup. We recently launched [FAST channel] AspireTV Life, and we're seeing really great success with that.

**How aggressive will you continue to be in expanding the UPtv brand into the streaming arena, as well as through content acquisitions?**

We're looking at opportunities constantly to acquire things that I think can really help serve this audience. We recently completed a partnership with Ovation where we now represent [both companies] to advertisers and to cable operators and distributors. It's a great addition for us. But with anything we always want to remain a reliable place that people can trust and know that the content is going to be right for them and their family. That philosophy works great for our distributors, advertisers and viewers.

**Why is it important to you to extend the UPtv brand beyond television through community initiatives like "UPlift Someone," which promotes acts of kindness and social responsibility?** Nothing makes your brand more real than putting your sweat, blood and tears and personal time into it. I think that the kind of people we hire and the culture that we have built up at UPtv makes our people eager to go out and uplift others and do these things. Being uplifting to others is a core value of our company, and I think it's really important that you live your brand. ●

## BONUS FIVE

**Favorite shows of all time?** ESPN's *College GameDay* and HBO's *The Sopranos*

**Books on your nightstand?** *Outlive: The Science and Art of Longevity* by Peter Attia

**Favorite vacation destination?** Tuscany

**Shows you're binge watching?** History's *Theodore Roosevelt* and other historical documentaries

**Favorite app?** HBR (*Harvard Business Review*)



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- Telecom
- Energy & Chemicals
- Life Science & Tech
- Travel & Hospitality
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