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Special Report: Black History Month

CableFAX Daily™

Thursday — January 31, 2013

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 24 / No. SPECIAL

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African-Americans: Growing Force of Content Consumers Across Platforms

As cable nets celebrate Black History Month this Feb with programs to honor African-American legacy, the latest research shows that African-American households have become an important force in the medium. The average black viewer watches nearly 7 hours of TV daily, almost 2.5 more hours per day than the average viewer in the US, according to Nielsen. And its population is growing: the US African-American population reached almost 42mln in '12 and continues to grow at more than 1.5 times the pace of the generation population.

In light of this fact, “networks and programmers can best serve African-American audiences by expanding their offerings to this niche audience” and “by increasing the industry’s talent pipeline to generate more value for this group,” *Nicol Turner-Lee*, head of **NAMIC**, said in an interview. “When we have more people of color working behind the scenes and in front of the camera, we can depart from cultural stereotypes and facilitate the telling of authentic stories about the African-American experience.”

Additionally, 83% of urban African-Americans subscribe to a multichannel service while 42% urban African-American households subscribe to a premium channel, **Horowitz Associates’** research found. According to **TV Basics**, a publication of the **TV Bureau of Advertising**, in total, the top 25 African-American DMAs contain 61% of all African-American TV households in the US. NYC tops the list, with 1.28mln African-American households, followed by Atlanta, Chicago, DC and Philadelphia.

The good news is networks are recommitting to more family-oriented scripted content focusing on African-Americans, Turner-Lee said. African-American owned-and-operated networks like **ASPIRE** and the upcoming **Revolt** and other start-up networks are also introducing “a new element of reach as they tap into the viewing preferences of African-American audiences,” she said.

Nielsen would seem to agree. “Blacks value family time and entertaining” so “build your advertising and messaging around family and social themes,” the research firm said in a report. The challenge, for both mainstream

Lifetime Celebrates Black History Month With 3 World Premiere Movies



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and black-targeted nets, is to “convey and advocate for a nuanced understanding of the complexity of the black experience, culture and identity in their programming, instead of defaulting to sensationalism and stereotypes,” said *Adriana Waterston*, vp, marketing & business development, Horowitz Associates.

Furthermore, “The Black Experience” in America can’t be reduced down to “a single experience or worldview,” she said. Within the black community “there is a great deal of diversity in music, culture, values, and lifestyles, as well as differing political, economic and social realities that are often not reflected in the programming for or about black Americans,” she said. Nielsen found the most popular programs in African-American households are those starring black characters, sports, variety shows with diverse contestants, and award shows.

Reality programming is especially popular with viewers 18-49. From Jan through June '12, the Super Bowl was the most watched program among blacks, with 12.5mln viewers. For persons of all ages, the Jan 22 audition ep “American Idol” drew the most viewers, while “The Game” was the most popular program for viewers 18-49. The top-rated award shows was the Grammys followed by the Academy Awards and **BET Honors**, attracting 6.7mln, 3mln and 2.6mln African-American viewers, respectively.

Video Audience Composition – Monthly Time Spent in Hours, Minutes, Ethnicity & Race				
	White	African-American	Hispanic	Asian
On Traditional TV	143:40:00	206:36:00	127:14:00	96:13:00
Watching Timeshifted TV (all TV homes)	12:26	9:30	7:48	8:37
Using a DVD/Blu Ray Device	5:07	6:41	5:11	3:54
Using a Game Console	6:24	7:43	7:29	5:24
Watching Video on Internet	5:49	9:34	9:24	13:16
Mobile Subscribers Watching Video on a Mobile Phone	5:02	7:05	6:15	6:03

Source: Nielsen

Some common themes among programs popular with blacks are a tendency to broadcast live, a diverse cast or contestants and feature a social media component. Meanwhile, in the age of TV Everywhere, blacks are still TV’s heaviest consumers, watching nearly 40 hours more per month than the average urban consumer, Waterston said. Regarding OTT viewing, 31% of black adults watch online video content and almost 48% of black viewers’ time spent is on **YouTube** alone. The mobile category could also be playing a role, as smartphone penetration among African-Americans has blossomed from 33% to more than 54% in the last year. In addition, African-Americans use their mobile devices to download and view videos at a rate 30% higher than the general population.

Lifetime® Congratulates Our 10 NAACP Image Awards Nominees.

Steel Magnolias Television Movie, **Queen Latifah** Steel Magnolias, **Alfre Woodard** Steel Magnolias, **Jill Scott** Steel Magnolias, **Phylicia Rashad** Steel Magnolias, **Tory Kittles** Steel Magnolias, **Afemo Omilami** Steel Magnolias, **Abducted: The Carlina White Story** Television Movie, **Elizabeth Hunter** Abducted: The Carlina White Story, **Keke Palmer** Abducted: The Carlina White Story





Lifetime's 'Betty and Coretta'

Black History Month on Cable

As Black History Month rolls around, so does a wealth of related programming. So much, it can be a little daunting to find it all, especially with so many different premiere dates throughout the month. That's why some distributors, including **Verizon FiOS** and **Comcast**, are creating Black History Month VOD folders. "VOD as a platform allows us to aggregate this showcase, so that there's only one place that customers need to remember," said *Joe Lawson*, dir of content strategy and acquisition for Verizon. "You have multiple networks, several dozen hours of content and if you miss it on linear, it's right there for them to see." FiOS will be spreading the word through social media, its FiOS newsletter and barkers. "We do try to ask for exclusivity when possible. Often times with the free on demand content, that isn't really an option, but nevertheless, we still ask," said *Mike Pannacciulli*, Verizon dir of content strategy and acquisition. "This is the first time we've done this folder, and we'll learn a lot from this. But we've also learned from a few folders in the past. We're looking out for the year ahead now and starting to engage programmers to say, 'Hey, here's the tactics we're looking at. Do you have content that will fit well in this? Let's start the conversation now.' And those programmers that are going to step up to the plate and offer us compelling content, those are the ones we're going to work with."

There is plenty to choose from. **ESPN's** slate of VOD programming includes a panel led by *Spike Lee*, *Robin*

Roberts and *Bob Ley* talking about black athletes as well as ESPN Films' "*Wendell Scott: A Race Story*," about how the first black man to win a race in NASCAR's top series persevered in a sport dominated by white males. **Music Choice** has month-long campaign "The New Classic," featuring a collection of videos and original content showcasing black music. **Lifetime** has a trio of films premiering and windowing on VOD, including "Betty & Coretta," (Feb 2, 8pm) which details the friendship between *Coretta Scott King (Angela Bassett)* and *Dr Betty Shabazz (Mary J. Blige)*. Lifetime may not immediately bring to mind an African-American audience, but the demo has long been an important part of the net. Last fall's "Steel Magnolias" remake with an all-black cast scored record ratings and multiple **NAACP** Image nominations. And the net's 2nd most-watched movie of all-time is "*The Fantasia Barrino Story*," which details how the African-American singer overcame sexual abuse, poverty and illiteracy.

"We have a long track record of having great skewing African-American films," said Lifetime evp, programming *Rob Sharenow*. "It's something that just sort of lives on our network as a matter of course. We definitely feel like we are a network that showcases top tier entertainment that really welcomes African-Americans." And the net has scored some big names: *Wendy Davis* and *Ashanti* for the cast of "Army Wives," Black History month film premieres "Twist of Faith" featuring *Toni Braxton*

and “Pastor Brown” with *Salli Richardson-Whitfield*, and another movie later this year with *Jennifer Hudson* and *Octavia Spencer* (“Call Me Crazy”). “This is pretty special having 3 big premieres like this [during Black History Month],” said Sharenow. “Part of it is building on the success we did have with ‘Steel Magnolias’ and



TV One's original series 'Belles'

really tapping into the audience. It's a little bit of give the people what they want because they really do respond to these movies.”

Not all Black History fare goes the serious route. At **TV One**, the net has decided to use the month to highlight African-Americans in comedy, and will debut its 3rd original scripted series “Belles” on Feb 1, 10pm ET. “The idea is nothing charts our progress as a people more than African-American humor,” said *Maureen Guthman*, TV One's svp of program strategy and acquisitions. “No matter how far you go back, when you look at how African-Americans use comedy, it's a platform for social change, it has soothed us during times of strife.” She pointed to *Richard Pryor's* use of comedy to highlight some of the social inequities and “Good Times” ('74-'79) portrayal of a black family in primetime. “There is almost an automatic response to Black History Month. You see pretty much the same fare over and over again, whether it's the *Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, a *Martin Luther King* biography. After a while, you need a different perspective,” she said. “As an African-American network, we thought it was important to offer something a bit outside what one would normally find that month.” The net will showcase “The Jeffersons,” “A Different World” along with “The Richard Pryor Show” and “Good Times” as well as a slate of comedic movies. Along the comedy vein, TV One is also launching Web series “Black History Bowl” Feb 1 at tvone.tv. Starring *Franchesca Ramsey*, the blogger behind “S*%# White Girls Say to Black Girls,”

the 6-ep series will compare some of today's black celebrities with historical icons in the black community.

The children's space also will honor the month. Interesting doings at **Disney Junior**, whose “Doc McStuffins” cartoon, which stars an African-American girl playing doctor to toys, is front and center. The show inspired a group of female African-American physicians to begin the “We Are Doc McStuffins” movement meant to encourage young girls, particularly African-American girls. The group grew to form the Artemis Medical Society, an organization of more than 2500 female African-American physicians and medical students from around the world. Disney Junior will run “We Are Doc McStuffins” interstitials throughout the month featuring the cartoon Doc along with 3 real of the founding mem-



Disney Junior's 'We Are Doc McStuffins' interstitials

bers of the movement. A blog post on the series by Dr *Myiesha Taylor*, an emergency doctor based in Dallas, sparked other African-American physicians to contact her, and they created a “We Are Doc McStuffins” photo collage. In monitoring social media, Disney Junior came along Taylor's blog post. “We were so moved by her words and her astute assessment of what a series like Doc could offer our kids that we got in touch with her to thank her,” said *Nancy Kanter*, svp, original programming and gm, Disney Junior Worldwide. “From there we wanted to find other ways to support the message. That led us to creating the interstitials with some of the doctors so that kids would have a chance to see exactly what they do and hear their stories. I have to say this has been one of the proudest moments in my career in kids TV.” Read Taylor's original blog post here: <http://www.coilyembrace.com/coily-blogs/coily-news/492-disneys-doc-mcstuffins-brings-diversity-to-childrens-daytime-tv-a-new-positive-image-for-children-of-color>