

CableFAX Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Not Universal: New Year Brings Drops, Shuffles & Change-Ups

MSG and Time Warner Cable's feud grabbed the big headlines this New Year's Eve, but another sports net disappeared from systems across the country Jan 1. At the start of '12, **Universal Sports**, a partnership between **NBC Sports** and **InterMedia**, switched from a multicast network to a cable net as its deals for distribution through local stations expired. **DirecTV** signed a multi-year distribution deal for **Universal** in June, and the net recently inked deals with Alaska's **GCI**, **MTC Cable** (NY) **Hiawatha Broadband** (MN), **Cascade Comm** (OR), **Waitsfield** (VT) and **SkyAngel**. Universal Sports said it is in advanced negotiations with many other distributors and expects to announce additional deals soon, but in the meantime, it's directing folks to www.IWantUniversalSports.com. **NBCU's** minority ownership stake in the venture didn't help the net reach a carriage deal with **Comcast** by midnight Jan 1. The net ran crawls, as well as ads in Atlanta and other markets, that encouraged viewers to reach out to their providers. With the multicast channel previously carried by NBC O&Os as well as various local stations, several distributors (including **Time Warner Cable** and **Cablevision**) lost the net. When it comes to the move to a subscription service, Universal Sports said it will free it from bandwidth constraints and offer an HD version for the 1st time. "Universal Sports Network offers some of the most compelling Olympic and adventure sports programming from around the world. This is valuable, exclusive content that merits the payment of subscription fees," said the net's Website. -- As for MSG, Time Warner Cable NY area subs lost the RSN and its **Knicks**, **Rangers** and **Sabres** coverage just after midnight Jan 1. "While sports programming battles are always ugly, TWC is in a slightly better position than most distributors, as a meaningful percentage of consumers in NYC do not have a choice of providers," **BTIG's Rich Greenfield** said in a note Tues. Greenfield noted that *David Beckham* staying in L.A. should help TWC with its own sports net strategy. For what it's worth, MSG shares closed down 1.36% Tues. -- **GCI** added **MLB Net** to its lineup, where it replaced **DirecTV** RSN **Root Sports** (formerly **FSN Northwest**). GCI said it could not reach an agreement with Root before its contract expired on Jan 1. -- There were a lot of last minute deals and extensions, but no New Year's Eve would be complete without some retrans blackouts. **DISH** subs in Wyoming ushered in 2012 without some broadcast stations. DISH customers can't currently view Casper, WY's **ABC** affil **KTWO**, **Fox** affil **KFNB** or **CBS** affil **KGWC**. Also dark on DISH are Cheyenne stations **KLWY-DT2** (ABC affil) and **KLWY** (Fox). "Despite determined efforts by DISH Network to negotiate new deals with **Wyomedia Corp**, **Silverton Broadcasting** and **Mark III Media**, ... the broadcasters have removed their local TV channels while DISH refuses to pay an exorbitant rate increase," DISH said (it has launched www.FairSatellite.com). Time Warner Cable subs in Corpus Christi, TX, have been without **Cordillera** stations, including NBC affil **KRIS**, since Dec 12. On Tues, **KRIS** said negotiations were ongoing and that it hopes to have an agreement in place before Sat's Houston Texans-Cincinnati Bengals wildcard playoff game.

Netflix New Year: After a lamentable '11 rife with customer complaints and defections and a shellacking in the media and on Wall St, **Netflix** is touting the Feb 6 availability of all 8 1st-season eps of original series "Lilyhammer." Starring



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"The Sopranos" actor and E Street Band guitarist *Steven Van Zandt* as a mobster who enters witness protection in Lillehammer, Norway, the series is part of NFLX's bold foray into originals. CEO *Reed Hastings* has said the company will begin this year ponying up \$1-2bln annually on such programming (*Cfax*, 12/7), and *BTIG's Rich Greenfield* tabbed the gambit as his top investment consideration of '12 regarding media stocks. With "House of Cards" and "Orange is the New Black" slated for feature later this year and new eps of "Arrested Development" coming in '13, said Greenfield, "we expect Netflix's push into original programming to be a positive surprise for investors in 2012 and expect it to create a new form of 'buzz' around the Netflix brand that has been missing since the serious missteps of Q3 2011." NFLX ranked 6th among US Websites in total Nov streams with approx 260mln, according to **Nielsen**.

Wireless: **LightSquared** tapped *Marc Montagner* as CFO, an appointment that may help smooth the company's relations with **Sprint** as he oversaw the Sprint-Nextel merger. Sprint recently granted LightSquared a 30-day extension of a former Dec 31 deadline to gain **FCC** clearance to operate its network, an effort that has been hampered by alleged GPS interference. In Oct, Sprint announced plans to rely on LightSquared to help meet its spectrum needs through '15.

In the States: **Bounce TV** continues to ramp its affil base, announcing deals with stations in 9 markets including Cincinnati and Savannah, GA. Bounce TV has cleared over 50% of the country and 72% of African American homes to date. -- **Rentrak** inked a StationView Essentials contract with **Camelot Strategic Marketing & Media**, which counts **Southwest Airlines** among its clients.

Advertising/Marketing: **History** announced an interesting marketing campaign for new series "Full Metal Jousting." It will include live jousting demonstrations at 2 **Pro Bull Riding** events this month and promos at 6 overall. -- **NBC's** Super Bowl ad inventory is now exhausted, the 30-sec spots, which went for a record \$3.5mln, having sold out by Thanksgiving. The broadcaster noted this year's addition of more extended spots of 60-sec or longer. -- Nutritional supplement company **Altient** agreed to join **Lifetime's** Balance Your Life World Tour, a 10-city extension of net morning show "The Balancing Act" that kicks off this year in Memphis in Mar and attracts more than 25K women at each stop.

Ratings: Viewership for **ESPN's** coverage of the Rose Bowl may have declined 10% YOY, but the game combined with the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl to notch an avg 10.7 HH coverage rating, compared to a 9.9 a year ago. The Fiesta delivered a 37% increase and won the night for ESPN as the most-watched net on TV. -- **NESN's** Boston Bruins ratings so far this season are far from bearish, as the net set its 3 best all-time regular season HH game ratings in Nov and Dec and has established 16 of its top historical team ratings in the past 2 months alone. -- "Oprah's Next Chapter" scored **OWN's** best Sun premiere ever with 1.1mln total viewers and a 1.1 rating among women 25-54.

Programming: **ION TV** renewed original police drama "Flashpoint" for a 13-ep 5th season. Shooting begins next month. -- **WFN: World Fishing Net** viewers can reel in new seasons of 6 shows this month along with 2 new series including "Water & Woods" (Sat). -- **TV One's** newest series focuses on black Americans who are missing, but don't garner national media attention. "Find Our Missing" is a 10-ep, docu-drama hosted by *S. Epatha Merkerson* ("Law & Order") that bows Jan 18 at 10pm ET.

Obit: Unable to recover from a recent heart attack, **Fox Sports Media Group** evp, production and exec prod *Doug Sellars* passed away Dec 30 at the age of 50. FSMP chmn *David Hill* called Sellars "a brilliant television producer, an

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Entry Questions: **Mary-Lou French** at 301-354-1851;
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BUSINESS & FINANCE

overwhelmingly proud Canadian, a true sports fan, and one of the kindest people you will ever know." -- **Turner** broadcaster *Jim Huber* passed away suddenly Mon following a recent diagnosis with acute leukemia. He was 67. "A terrific Emmy Award winning journalist and essayist, Jim made so many contributions during his more than 27 years with our company. He was a gentleman and wonderful individual and will be deeply missed," said Turner's *David Levy*.

People: Comcast vet *Marty Davidson* joined **SCTE** as vp, engineering and networks ops. -- *Jeff Pomeroy* has left **Turner Sports** and started his own Atlanta-based sports and entertainment PR firm, **JDP Comm.**

Business/Finance: Sanford Bernstein's *Craig Moffett* announced Comcast as his favorite long-term cable/satellite idea heading into '12 while recommending **Time Warner Cable** as well, and preached caution with **Cablevision**, **DISH** and **DirectTV**. Moffett prefers **Leap Wireless** in the telecom sector and raised **Sprint** to 'neutral.' -- **Viacom** said **Paramount** led all studios in gross '11 proceeds with a \$5.17bln global haul. "Transformers: Dark Side of the Moon" became the studio's 1st-ever \$1bln grossing flick and was 1 of 9 that grossed at least \$100mln domestically. -- **Zayo Group's zColo** purchased **MarquisNet's** data center business in Las Vegas that will become the 12th zColo Colocation facility.

CableFAX Daily Stockwatch

Company	1/03 Close	1-Day Ch	Company	1/03 Close	1-Day Ch
BROADCASTERS/DBS/MMDS					
DIRECTV:	43.32	0.56	CONCURRENT:	3.83	0.04
DISH:	29.07	0.59	CONVERGYS:	12.69	(0.08)
DISNEY:	38.31	0.81	CSG SYSTEMS:	15.07	0.36
GE:	18.36	0.45	ECHOSTAR:	21.81	0.87
NEWS CORP:	18.67	0.49	GOOGLE:	665.41	19.51
MSOS			HARMONIC:	5.17	0.13
CABLEVISION:	14.78	0.56	INTEL:	24.54	0.29
CHARTER:	57.19	0.25	JDSU:	10.84	0.40
COMCAST:	24.50	0.79	LEVEL 3:	17.19	0.20
COMCAST SPCL:	24.21	0.65	MICROSOFT:	26.77	0.81
GCI:	9.99	0.20	MOTOROLA MOBILITY:	38.70	(0.1)
KNOLOGY:	14.55	0.35	RENTRAK:	14.34	0.06
LIBERTY GLOBAL:	42.42	1.39	SEACHANGE:	7.20	0.17
LIBERTY INT:	16.52	0.30	SONY:	18.38	0.34
SHAW COMM:	20.15	0.28	SPRINT NEXTEL:	2.34	UNCH
TIME WARNER CABLE:	64.88	1.31	THOMAS & BETTS:	55.08	0.48
VIRGIN MEDIA:	22.04	0.66	TIVO:	8.92	(0.05)
WASH POST:	380.07	3.26	UNIVERSAL ELEC:	17.30	0.43
PROGRAMMING			VONAGE:	2.58	0.13
AMC NETWORKS:	37.34	(0.24)	YAHOO:	16.29	0.15
CBS:	27.27	0.13	TELCOS		
CROWN:	1.31	0.10	AT&T:	30.38	0.14
DISCOVERY:	40.87	(0.1)	VERIZON:	39.73	(0.39)
GRUPO TELEVISA:	21.31	0.25	MARKET INDICES		
HSN:	36.68	0.42	DOW:	12397.38	179.82
INTERACTIVE CORP:	42.52	(0.08)	NASDAQ:	2648.72	43.57
LIONSGATE:	8.43	0.11	S&P 500:	1277.06	19.46
LODGENET:	2.50	0.11			
NEW FRONTIER:	1.02	(0.01)			
OUTDOOR:	7.66	0.20			
SCRIPPS INT:	43.18	0.76			
TIME WARNER:	36.33	0.19			
VALUEVISION:	1.90	0.02			
VIACOM:	52.94	(0.39)			
WWE:	9.46	0.14			
TECHNOLOGY					
ADDVANTAGE:	2.09	(0.01)			
ALCATEL LUCENT:	1.70	0.14			
AMDOCS:	28.47	(0.06)			
AMPHENOL:	45.96	0.57			
AOL:	15.13	0.03			
APPLE:	411.23	6.23			
ARRIS GROUP:	10.83	0.01			
AVID TECH:	8.65	0.12			
BROADCOM:	29.45	0.10			
CISCO:	18.63	0.61			
CLEARWIRE:	2.00	0.06			

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SET VISIT

ABC Family's Dramatic Switch...

By Michael Grebb

After 3 years trying to get pregnant, actress Constance Marie was grateful to succeed with in vitro fertilization in 2008. But she had one big fear. "It was the leap of 'what if they switched the little tube?' She's out of the body and into the lab and then back into the body. It could happen." Interestingly, it wasn't long before a script exploring just such a premise landed in Marie's hands. And now after only 10 episodes, ABC Family's "Switched at Birth" has become the net's 2nd highest rated series of all time (18-49) as it explores what would happen if two very different families discovered 16 years later that the hospital had given each the wrong baby—and how that revelation would affect 2 teen daughters suddenly facing a major identity crisis.

In Aug, ABC Family picked up 22 more episodes, which are set to premiere on Tues, Jan 3 (8pm ET). Marie, who plays one of the moms whose daughter was switched, says she isn't surprised the show has resonated in such a short time. "I saw the future of the storylines that have heart and that a lot of people can relate to," she says. "Just in 10 episodes, people connected to the characters and got really involved in the relationships."

The series' addictive nature largely flows from the mind of showrunner Lizzy Weiss, who appropriately conjured it up while pregnant herself. And the plot twists and turns packed into those first 10 eps (along with a cliffhanger finale) didn't hurt the series' success as audiences got sucked into the intricate storylines. "We never tread water, which is something I'm really proud of," says Weiss. "We never have episodes where nothing happens."

Of course, it might have been enough to base a show around the switched-at-birth premise and leave it that. But not for Weiss or the execs at ABC Family. They saw an opportunity to go even deeper. So they took a big risk and made one of

the switched daughters—Daphne Vasquez, played by Katie Leclerc—deaf. And that twist has become the heart of the show. It's perhaps even more fitting that Leclerc, who effortlessly plays a 16-year-old despite being 25, has Ménière's disease of the inner ear, which can lead

to degenerative hearing loss. And while Leclerc learned American Sign Language (ASL) in high school before she was diagnosed, she says her background doesn't necessarily make it any easier to take on such a complex role—her first lead. "It's a lot of work, and I feel like I never been challenged the way I've been challenged playing Daphne," she says. "I've got a lot of balls in the air, but it's awesome. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

At least Leclerc already knew ASL before taking the role. Her counterpart Vanessa Marano, who plays the other switched daughter Bay Kennish, has been learning as she goes.

"Thankfully, my character is learning ASL, so I can look as stupid as I want to," she jokes, noting that the director some-

times leaves in her mistakes for authenticity. Of course, the constant signing is part of what makes the show so different than anything else on TV. "It adds this other layer to what we're doing, which is beautiful but also way more interesting," she says. Scenes that might otherwise be "considered teen cliché" are "absolutely not on this show because they're done in a completely different way that people aren't used to," she says.

And that's not easy. While some scenes consist entirely of signing with subtitles, most require actors to say their lines while also signing them. Known as "Simultaneous Communication" or "SimCom," the feat requires knowledge of 2 entirely different syntax structures. "It's so hard because you're saying one thing but your hands are doing something different," notes Weiss. "It's much harder than just signing. That's been particularly difficult for Katie and Constance." In fact, Constance Marie caught on to ASL so fast that she contracted tendonitis. "I did it a little faster than the average bear has to do it, so I kind of hurt myself," she recalls. "I would do it well, and they would write to it." The breaking point was a 5½-page scene in which Marie's character confesses that she knew about the switch years ago. The scene was a major bombshell for fans, so everyone wanted to get it right. "It took half a day," she says. "I was signing for half a day. No one but a professional interpreter signs that much—and they know what they're doing."

ASL injuries aren't as much of a problem for Lea Thompson, who plays mom Kathryn Kennish and admits her character "isn't generally known as being the quickest



Breaking Bread: D.W. Moffett and Lea Thompson (left) try to keep it together.



ASL Duo: Constance Marie (left) and Katie Leclerc (right) sign as they act.

SET VISIT

in the cast, so she's learning slowly." She compares her character's ASL skills to "pigeon sign language." But the veteran actress, who exploded onto the scene with 1985's theatrical hit "Back to the Future" and later spent 5 years helming hit TV sit-com "Caroline in the City" in 1990s, modestly says it's nice to sit back and let others do the heavy lifting. "I've never really been part of this kind of ensemble," she says. "Usually I'm trying to carry the ball up the hill, so it's nice to let the girls do it."

In fact, Thompson speaks as the "girls"—Marano and



Identity Crisis: Leclerc (left) and Vanessa Marano (right) navigate a complicated family situation.

Leclerc—sit in hair-and-makeup chairs next to her, smirking as they listen to her gush about them and the other actors on the show. "We're

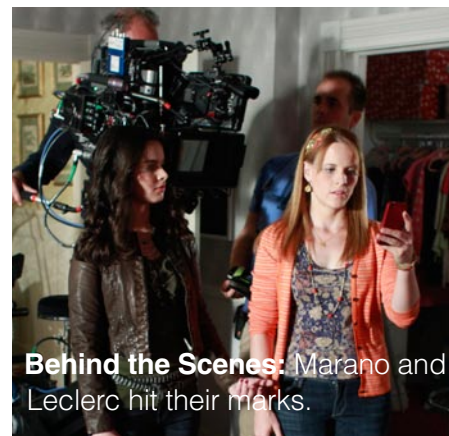
so lucky," says Thompson, motioning around the trailer. "It's like a spa in here. They're such nice people." When I joke that Leclerc and Marano will get jaded once they're older, 19-year-old Marano interjects, "I did jaded when I was 10." Adds Thompson: "So she's bounced back." But then Thompson gets more introspective about it. "Everyone on this set is actually here because they love to act," she says. "They love to be part of the experience... I think that's how you keep people from getting jaded... There are some actors who get into it accidentally and aren't showbiz folk. They're not carnies."

Carnies or not, Marano and Leclerc have become great friends, which is evident as they laugh and joke between takes at the Santa Clarita lot housing the main set. Not only do they spend just about every day together working, but they hang out on the weekends as well. "Vanessa and I spend a lot of time together," says Leclerc. "She is obsessed with reality television. I'll cook dinner... Her and my boyfriend will sit and watch reality TV together. We'll have a family dinner." Leclerc says that family vibe extends to everyone in the cast. "We have fun," she says. "We love each other. In the process of becoming a family onscreen, we've kind of become one offscreen." Thompson also cites the writing as part of what binds the cast together because no one ever feels bored or backed into a behavioral corner. "It really starts with Lizzy Weiss," she says. "She's a very fair minded and open minded person... She doesn't really judge the characters. We're all willing to be the bad guy, and I think that's why it sort of resonates with people."

That attention to character was part of what attracted veteran actor D.W. Moffett to the cast. Moffett, who just finished up a high-profile run on critically acclaimed "Friday Night Lights" and plays a dad on "Switched," laments that dads often fade into the background on teen-oriented shows. "But Lizzy doesn't write that way, which is good," he says. "On kids shows, the parents can be treated two-dimensionally, and in this show they're not." Moffett also marvels that the deaf component has only helped gain fans. "I'm so pleasantly surprised about how the deaf thing has resonated," he says. "When we first started shooting, I said if the kids are good we'll have a shot. That was my only concern: Is America going to watch subtitles on television, particularly little kids. But they love it."

The result has been worth the risk, says Kate Juergens, ABC Family evp, original series programming and development. "I think the deaf element is surprising and intriguing. There's a way in for everybody. There's a way in for adults. There's a way in for teens... I think that's sort of the secret sauce there." Juergens says she and Weiss had been "dancing around each other" for a while when Weiss pitched the show—at first without the deaf component. But seeking a unique twist, the net asked Weiss to make one of the daughters different in some way. "She came back with this script that was so amazing we were just head over heels about it," recalls Juergens. "Hits always come out of nowhere. But I'm not surprised that people responded as much as we did when we read it."

In a way, "Switched at Birth" uses a classic dramatic conceit: It forces together two worlds that don't normally mix, with each having to accommodate the other. "They don't get to be separate," notes Marie. "They don't get to be isolated. They must deal with each other. And how that is handled is so beautiful." But perhaps it also comes down to a human desire to understand those who are different than oneself—and the natural drama that creates. "I think as artists it's one of the gifts we can give, to help people learn about other human beings," says Thompson.



Behind the Scenes: Marano and Leclerc hit their marks.

(Michael Grebb is executive editor of CableFAX and can be reached at mgrebb@accessintel.com).