

CableFAX Daily™

Tuesday — May 8, 2007

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 18 / No. 089

Tomato Carte: Martin Lauds Cable But Stands Firm on A La Carte, Multicast

Any fight fans who hoped **FCC** chmn *Kevin Martin* would offer a scolding rant against cable, complete with audience gasps, awkward silences and perhaps even a few boos, was a bit disappointed at the **Cable Show** on Mon. In the opening keynote, the country's top telecom regulator was actually kinda... nice. "I actually don't dislike cable," he said. He went on to credit cable for jumpstarting broadband and forcing telcos to slash prices in telephony—all to respond to cable's competitive threat. "As a regulator, it is this type of competition we are trying to facilitate," he said. But just as the audience started gathering wood for a Kumbaya bonfire in the center of the ballroom, Martin started dropping the bombs that everyone knew was coming. He noted that he has often aided cable when it was a new entrant into broadband and phone, but "I have and will continue to side with the new entrants trying to break into the market where you are the traditional incumbent." Martin then went on to question how cable can oppose multicast must-carry for limiting consumer choice but at the same time force customers to buy large bundles of programming rather than support mandatory a-la-carte. "You can't have it both ways," he said. "And if you advocate subjecting broadcast channels to consumer choice then why shouldn't cable channels be similarly subject to free market choices as well." At a press conference following the opening session, **NCTA** pres/CEO *Kyle McSarrow* made sure to thank Martin for coming to Vegas but said he was "puzzled" by the chmn's point on multicast and a la carte, pointing out that the former involves adding programming and the later involves taking it away from consumers. "There's an inconsistency there," he said. "We still do have a different opinion." And for a brief, shining moment... it was Camelot.

Abundance: Cable Chiefs Contemplate Very Good Times

One thing was certain at the Cable Show's opening general session: it's good to be the King. Still giddy from stellar Q1 results, MSO chiefs projected an aura of confidence that cable will continue to exceed expectations and grow handily for at least the next several years. "We're going to come out ahead in the competitive balance," said **Comcast** COO *Steve Burke*, noting that 55% of Comcast's net broadband adds are from ex-DSL customers despite telcos' steep price cuts. **Time Warner Cable** pres/CEO *Glenn Britt* said competition "really made all of us better... that's why you see the great results." Panelists agreed, however, that cable needs to be careful not to overextend itself as it rolls out new services. "None of these things happen overnight," said **Cablevision** COO *Tom Rutledge*, adding that the wireless strategy "isn't that clear to us." Burke agreed that "it's very hard to do 5 new businesses at the same time" and said it would be a "huge mistake" to take on wireless while so busy signing up triple play customers. Said Britt: "The hardest thing to do is to pace it so we don't overwhelm our employees. You can really mess those businesses up if you go too fast." *Aryeh Bourkoff*, vice chmn, technology, media and telecoms investment banking, **UBS Investment Research**, said he thinks cable will tackle commercial services before wireless. Burke cited other big opportunities in other areas

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such as broadband content and said Comcast expects its recent deal with Yahoo! to yield “over a billion dollars in the next 6 years.” He also said VOD is only in the “3rd or 4th inning in terms of what it could be,” noting that big movies like “Spiderman 3” could conceivably be released simultaneously on VOD and in theaters—assuming they can offer it in a way that doesn’t kill the theater business. “It’s our job to give people what they want, and anyone who doesn’t do that is going to be left behind.”

Guide Me: The secret to a holistic consumer experience? It may be as simple as point and click. So says **Hillcrest Labs** CEO *Dan Simpkins*, whose new remote has, count ‘em, two buttons. At an afternoon **Cable Show** session, he said Hillcrest’s R&D folks always knew that point-and-click was hard-wired into kids. What blew their minds, though, were the **AARP** members they tested – some of them over 70 and computer illiterate – took to it like the proverbial ducks to water. He cited the stunning success of the point-and-click **Nintendo Wii** as evidence that the industry needs to start re-imagining the remote, not as a channel changer, but as a mouse. **Gemstar-TV Guide’s** *Ryan O’Hara* offered that, unlike **Google**, where users know exactly what they’re looking for, channel guide users only have a sense. That’s why he’s bullish on guides offering editor-provided suggested viewing options, that factor in past behavior and stated preferences. All panelists gave props to **Apple’s** iPod for its simplicity, but **Time Warner Cable** firebrand *Peter Stern* was more reticent to praise Apple and argued TW’s in the same business, namely to provide a “seamless end-to-end viewer experience.” When he attacked some of cable’s smaller, more nimble challengers – pointing out that TW has more subs than Vonage, despite just a 25% national footprint, and more DVR subs than TiVo – moderator *Kara Swisher* of the *WSJ* defended their place in history and shot back, “Yes, but the frontier is littered with the bodies of dead pioneers.”

Strange Happenings: Attendees of the Cable Show in Las Vegas woke up to hear helicopters circling after a man was killed in a blast early Mon at nearby Luxor’s parking garage. Police said the man, who worked out a business inside the hotel, was killed when he tried to pick up a device on top of a car. “This appears to have been a small device that was constructed in such a way to target a single individual victim,” police told the *AP*. No other damage was reported, and things continued normally at the show Mon. -- The biggest buzz Mon was also the biggest buzz Sun: **HBO** chmn/CEO *Chris Albrecht’s* arrest for suspicion of assaulting his girlfriend. The arrest came in the wee hours of Sun morning, following Sat night’s fight between *Oscar De La Hoya* and *Floyd Mayweather Jr*, which was broadcast on PPV by **HBO**. Albrecht was booked into the Clark County Detention Center and later released, according to *AP*. HBO offered no comment by deadline.

5Qs with Bridget Baker, pres, NBC Universal TV Networks Distribution: How has your role shifted since David Zaslav left, and after the reorganizations that have followed? I have continued to maintain close contact with all of our partners on a daily basis, so my external focus has not changed. However, I have more internal responsibility on the NBCU and **GE** side of things. What’s the most challenging part of your job right now? Outside of not having enough time in the day, it’s staying on top of the ever-changing landscape. Our industry is moving at a record pace and we are constantly looking at ways to respond to our customers needs by providing them with strategic solutions to their competition and to their product offerings. **NBCU and other programmers can go direct to consumers with Web/mobile content. Does that make traditional distribution deals more complicated?** Certainly technology has



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allowed us to present our shows and networks in different ways, including on-the-go, small screens and on demand. Our MSO partners have always provided a unique television viewing experience watching shows such as **USA's** "Monk" or **Sci Fi's** "Battlestar Galactica." That experience through the television is still favored. The cable model is one that works and has worked for decades. Content owners and distributors need to continue to make the viewing experience for the consumer as engaging as possible, utilizing technology, such as high-definition, on-demand and interactive applications. **How is the explosion of VOD changing the way you approach deals with operators?** On Demand programming allows us to bring more to the table and provide our customers with additional content to help drive their businesses. Right now, we are attempting to provide each affiliate with programming that they want. Going forward, we will customize based on the needs of our customers, whether it's programming from NBC Television, **Universal Pictures** or our cable networks. **What's NBCU's focus at the Cable Show? What do you hope to get out of it?** We view the Cable Show as a great opportunity to meet with key influencers and decision makers from all of our various multiplatform partners. We listen to what's on their minds and showcase our latest content. Our meetings in Las Vegas will focus on the many ways we can jointly move forward.

Floor Color: Day 1's obligatory chatter was Albrechtian and the must-have items were **Fox** pieces: a **Fuel TV** skate-deck (that's the board part of a skateboard, for those of you older than 20) signed by *Ryan Sheckler*, a 17-year vet of the skateboarding circuit, and a red **Fox News Channel** gym bag, which was remarkably fair and balanced. Also grabbing eyeballs was Comcast's huge booth stuffed with its programming stable and attended by Elmo and Bob the Builder. **The Sportsman Channel** had live models of hunters and fishers who seemed as faux as the stuffed bass on the wall, but were real. The oddest placement: **Hustler TV's** booth, featuring Vegas' own *Renee Diaz*, Nov'05 Pet of the Month, situated next to family friendly **Ion Networks**. Most logical placement: **HBO's** booth next to Showtime's, obviously the high-rent district. Not all was out front—those invited to meetings with **NBCU's** Chiller network found themselves in a room with the original Chucky doll (behind glass, of course) and the death mask of *Alfred Hitchcock*. Impressive tech was at **MTV**, which showed off its mobile wares on different platforms.

iHollywood Notebook: As cable operators contemplate the quadruple-play, Cable Show attendees on Sun tried to get their hands around the wireless world at iHollywood's Mobile Bootcamp. Mobile devices are "the absolute ultimate in convenience," said *Clint Stinchcomb*, evp and gm of emerging nets at **Discovery**. But he and others acknowledged that it's unclear how cable operators and programmers will monetize the medium. "We're still playing, like cable in the 70s," said *Bernard Gershon*, svp/gm of **ABC News Digital Media Group**. *Oswin Eleonora*, svp, North America at **LogicaCMG Telecoms**, said cable operators will likely focus more on communications apps than mobile video/entertainment—at least in the early stages of the quad-play. Of course, that doesn't mean operators aren't looking to integrate cable-like services on handsets, said *Bob Shallow*, svp/gm, mobile entertainment group at **TV Guide**; it's just a question of when. Said *KC Esterson*, vp, digital media at **Disney ABC Cable Networks**: "We all have to hold on and be patient." In one panel, *Michael Pusateri*, vp, engineering at **Disney-ABC Television Group**, noted that "when you're someone like Disney, you can take a long term view" but said the lack of mobile video standards make it even harder to do deals. "It's the wild west out there," he said. Other challenges noted by iHollywood panelists: Renegotiating existing licensing deals to fit mobile apps, figuring out business models that will pay for the investment involved and deciding how to monetize the Sprint jv, as well as cable's recent purchase of rights to use advanced wireless spectrum.

Operation OCAP: MSOs told the 1st **OCAP Developers Conference** in Vegas Sun that they're really close to launching OCAP, a common software platform that lets cable companies, network programmers and CE makers extend interactivity to TVs and other devices. **Cox** is currently trialing OCAP in 2 markets with plans to roll it out to 5 markets

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by year-end, according to CTO *Chris Bowick*. "I think you could see it in Cox's national footprint in the 1st half of 2008," he said, adding that Cox has already been doing a lot of work with On Ramp to OCAP, a subset that lets operators roll the spec out to legacy boxes. **Time Warner Cable** has already begun rolling out **Samsung's** HD OCAP box, and this week is purchasing **S-A's** OCAP-capable DVR, said TW svp, advanced technology and engineering *Mike Hayashi*. By July, all of TW's S-A footprint (70% of its footprint) should be OCAP-capable, he said. TW hopes to trial **Motorola's** OCAP boxes later this year with deployment slated for early next year. **Bright House** is tracking similarly to TW, said **Advance/Newhouse** svp policy & product *Arthur Orduña*. **Comcast** is in the midst of technical trials in a few cities, including Denver and Philly, and expects OCAP rollout in '08, said *James Mumma*, dir, Comcast ITV prod dev.

Booth Doings: Catch former NHLer *Ray Bourque* at the **Comcast** booth (11am-1pm), where he will sign autographs and greet fans on behalf of **Versus**. Gloveless brawls are optional. -- **Playboy** playmate *Pilar Lastra* will grace **Cable Positive's** booth with her presence (11am-12:30pm and 2pm-3:30pm), joining the org to battle HIV/AIDS and offer the chance to win a Playboy trip. -- "nip/tuck" costars *Dylan Walsh* and *Julian McMahon* will stump for **FX** at **Fox Cable Nets'** booth (11:15-12:30pm), where several Big Ten coaches including Michigan State men's basketball chief *Tom Izzo* will do the same for the **Big Ten Network**. -- Hey "American Idol" fans: catch the hosts of **TV Guide Channel's** "Idol Tonight" show at the net's booth, from 11:30am-12:30pm.

Competition: **DirectTV** will be the 1st to launch **The History Channel HD** when it debuts in Sept.

In the States: **Comcast** will launch in Memphis this summer **The Weather Channel's** 24/7 local forecast service **Weatherscan; here!** as a SVOD service July 1, for a monthly price of \$7.99; and **CSTV** June 27 in Chicago and South Bend, IN, deals that bring the net's sub total beyond 21mln. -- The **Comcast Media Center** launched the following this month on its "HITS Quantum" digital channel lineup: **A&E HD, HGTV HD, Food Network HD, Starz HD** and **Universal HD**. In addition, the CMS secured transport agreements for the standard-def feeds of **AMC** and **Fox News**. -- Digital multicast net **LATV**, which premiered last month with bilingual music and entertainment programming aimed at 12- to 34-year-old Latinos, signed 6 new affils in locales including Puerto Rico and Reno, NV. -- **TVN** inked a 5-year deal to distribute on demand Bollywood content from **Bodvod**, to be marketed under the "Saavn" brand name. -- **Charter** launched **WWE's** "24/7 On Demand" SVOD service.

Selling Point: Save for a pact with **DirectTV**, the **Big Ten Network** has yet to secure any major carriage deals, but the net's HD plans will likely make it more compelling to prospective partners. The net will produce in its 1st year more than 350 events, totaling more than 1K hours of original HD content. Not surprisingly, nearly all football games and men's basketball tilts will be featured in HD when the net launches in Aug.

Blood and Guts: Creepy cable net **The Fright Channel** will fittingly premiere in select markets on July 13—a Friday. Founded by veteran TV editor and prod *Rob Claridge*, the net will initially air in L.A. and NYC through purchased blocks. An original programming slate is under development, and online content will bow later this year at **TheFrightChannel.tv**.

Advertising: **Harris Corp** and **Comcast Spotlight** inked a deal to improve efficiency and productivity in ad sales by developing Comcast's "eRevisions" capabilities for Harris' "Novar Traffic and Billing System" for cable ad sales. The Harris system includes sales, scheduling, traffic, and spot buy analysis through to billing, and also helps manage complex, high-volume, multi-channel and multi-geographic cable ad spot buys. The integration of "eRevisions," which uses online tech to optimize diverse spot advertising systems, will allow account execs to check cable spot inventories in real time and to process and revise sales orders with greater accuracy and efficiency.

VOD: Add to the list of subs for **Rentrak's** VOD measurement system 17 on demand nets, including **BET Nets**,

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

BlueHighways TV, Discovery Nets, Fox Cable Nets, Lifetime and Shalom TV. -- **C-SPAN** has made a 107-min version of its highly praised "The Capitol" series available in HD VOD on cable systems nationwide. It marks the TV premiere of the series in HD. The package also includes 6 bonus featurettes that are available in SD only. Later this month, the doc will be sold in DVD format at the US Capitol.

People: **Disney Channel** tapped *Fonda Snyder* of **Cookie Jar Ent** as vp, original movies. -- **The Big Ten Network** appointed *Michael Feller* vp, programming; *Erin Harvego* vp, marketing; and *Roy Seinfeld* vp, ad sales. -- **RFD-TV** named *Ed Frazier* COO, *Mike Hanson* evp and *Bruce Gamache* CFO. -- **G4** promoted *Josh Krane* to svp, interactive and new media. -- **ImaginAsian Ent** appointed *Alexander Kim* as genl counsel and *Sung Lee* as vp, business development. -- *Damla Dogan* was appointed vp, original programming and series development, **E!** -- **Gospel Music Channel** promoted *Genia Edelman* to svp, national accounts.

Oops: **Sen Commerce's** Media Violence hearing is next Thurs, May 17.

Business/Finance: Network architecture firm **OpVista** secured \$15mln in additional funding led by **ComVentures**, to be used for global sales and marketing efforts.

CableFAX Daily Stockwatch

Company	05/07 Close	1-Day Ch	Company	05/07 Close	1-Day Ch
BROADCASTERS/DBS/MMDS					
BRITISH SKY:	50.59	0.16	AMPHENOL:	35.94	(0.4)
DIRECTV:	24.47	0.31	APPLE:	103.92	3.11
DISNEY:	36.06	0.21	ARRIS GROUP:	15.38	(0.16)
ECHOSTAR:	48.41	(0.49)	AVID TECH:	33.61	(0.38)
GE:	37.24	0.09	BLNDER TONGUE:	1.86	0.11
HEARST-ARGYLE:	25.76	(0.07)	BROADCOM:	33.36	0.22
ION MEDIA:	1.41	0.01	C-COR:	13.01	(0.06)
NEWS CORP:	23.85	0.27	CISCO:	27.81	(0.1)
TRIBUNE:	32.83	0.00	COMMSCOPE:	49.88	(0.45)
MSOS					
CABLEVISION:	35.45	(0.15)	CONCURRENT:	1.43	(0.09)
CHARTER:	3.50	(0.13)	CONVERGYS:	25.06	(0.56)
COMCAST:	26.73	(0.16)	CSG SYSTEMS:	27.26	(0.7)
COMCAST SPCL:	26.49	(0.06)	GEMSTAR TVG:	4.62	(0.05)
GCI:	14.74	(0.45)	GOOGLE:	467.27	(3.85)
KNOLOGY:	19.11	(0.62)	HARMONIC:	8.86	(0.01)
LIBERTY CAPITAL:	118.65	0.98	JDSU:	13.80	(0.2)
LIBERTY GLOBAL:	37.41	0.59	LEVEL 3:	5.54	(0.06)
LIBERTY INTERACTIVE:	25.44	(0.24)	MICROSOFT:	30.71	0.15
MEDIACOM:	8.57	0.16	MOTOROLA:	18.08	0.00
NTL:	28.22	0.00	NDS:	51.60	0.09
ROGERS COMM:	39.93	0.19	NORTEL:	24.78	(0.68)
SHAW COMM:	38.76	(0.25)	OPENTV:	2.41	(0.03)
TIME WARNER CABLE:	38.00	0.22	PHILIPS:	41.17	0.17
WASH POST:	765.13	(1.42)	RENTRAK:	15.09	0.14
PROGRAMMING					
CBS:	31.89	(0.11)	SEACHANGE:	8.84	(0.1)
CROWN:	5.95	0.20	SONY:	54.41	0.46
DISCOVERY:	22.82	0.85	SPRINT NEXTEL:	20.63	(0.07)
EW SCRIPPS:	42.31	(0.86)	THOMAS & BETTS:	54.39	(0.85)
GRUPO TELEVISA:	28.86	(0.21)	TIVO:	6.45	0.09
INTERACTIVE CORP:	35.37	(0.53)	TOLLGRADE:	12.57	0.13
LODGENET:	33.27	(0.41)	UNIVERSAL ELEC:	34.50	0.50
NEW FRONTIER:	8.93	0.07	VONAGE:	3.09	(0.03)
OUTDOOR:	10.82	0.22	VYYO:	7.24	(0.03)
PLAYBOY:	10.15	(0.25)	WEBB SYS:	0.07	0.02
TIME WARNER:	21.72	0.43	WORLDGATE:	0.71	0.00
UNIVISION:	36.23	0.00	YAHOO:	30.38	(0.6)
VALUEVISION:	11.30	0.28	TELCOS		
VIACOM:	41.94	0.63	AT&T:	39.60	0.12
WWE:	17.75	(0.47)	QWEST:	9.51	0.09
TECHNOLOGY					
3COM:	4.21	0.02	VERIZON:	40.83	0.17
ADC:	18.38	(0.19)	MARKET INDICES		
ADVANTAGE:	4.31	0.16	DOW:	13312.97	48.35
ALCATEL LUCENT:	13.27	(0.18)	NASDAQ:	2570.95	(1.2)
AMDOCS:	37.04	(0.21)			

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M.C. Antil's CableFolks

TWC's Greenberg Hangs Tough

Bev Greenberg had been on the job all of a few days when she got her first assignment. As the new community affairs person at Time Warner Milwaukee, Bev was asked to manage the company's participation in a city-wide program designed to keep kids off drugs and away from violence.

The program would eventually be called "Hang Tough" and would be built on the basic principle of that kids listen to one another more than they do adults. In the Hang Tough competition as drawn up by Bev that first year, kids would script 30-second PSAs and submit them, with the best being produced and aired by TWC and the local TV stations.

That was late in 1990. The first official Hang Tough competition ceremony was held in May, 1991. That was 16 years ago, or as Bev reminded me, 16 Beacon Awards ago. Just as Bev Greenberg has grown into one of the most respected and admired PR people in cable, so too the little idea for which she played midwife has become, perhaps, the single most decorated initiative in cable history.

And it just so happened that when Bev and I spoke this week, she had just staged the 2007 Hang Tough competition. "This year we got over 600 script submissions, which is our most ever" she said excitedly, adding that this year's ceremony was held in front of 1,600 people crammed into an auditorium built for 1,500. "The crowd was so into it this year," she told me.

Hang Tough is, of course, just one of things under Bev's watch. Others include: Wisconsin On Demand, a wildly successful VOD initiative; Time Warner Sports, an all-new analog net featuring Wisconsin pro, college and high school sports, much of it live; lobbying in the state legislature in Madison against the telcos' army of high-priced mouthpieces, empty suits and hired guns; and, of course,



M.C. Antil

the everyday LO production, media relations and community outreach activities that any MSO in a market the size of Milwaukee engage in.

In the interest of full disclosure, Bev and I talk every six months or so. When I'm looking for story ideas or something unique to write about, I call her.

A few years ago, right before the state DOT began tearing up a major Interstate that promised to do to Milwaukee traffic what the Big Dig did to Boston's, Bev told me about Time Warner Telecommuting, an initiative she was launching to promote telecommuting via TWC's digital products and services.

Before that, she was helping urban renewal in downtown Milwaukee by providing seed money to entrepreneurs starting businesses in the inner city.

And, of course, if you need to get something done at the highest levels of government, Bev's your go-to person. While she may not be on a first-name basis with the person you need to see directly—although she might—without question she knows someone who can get you to that person. Though I've not seen it, my guess is that her Rolodex contains some of the most powerful cheese heads north of Kenosha and south of Fond du Lac.

If you want to put your finger on the pulse of the great state of Wisconsin, call Bev Greenberg. Or better yet, call her the next time someone tells you that there are no more great ideas in the world; the next time someone rants about some social ill and blurts out, "Why doesn't somebody do something about that?"

Because, believe me, there are still great ideas in the world. And there is someone both willing and able to do something about society's ills. In fact, there is a whole team of people, and they work in a really cool building—a rehabbed old coal plant—on the banks of the river in downtown Milwaukee.

M.C. Antil can be reached at m.c.antil@att.net.

TUESDAY

11:15am-12:30pm
Nip/Tuck Stars
Julian McMahon
& Dylan Walsh

12:30pm & 2:30pm
Craig & Paul Pumphrey -
Fight Science Demo

1:00pm-2:30pm
Big Ten Conference Icons
Barry Alvarez, Tom Izzo,
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GUEST COLUMNIST

The Cable Show 2007: A Three-Day Immersion With No Limits

With the Cable Show upon us, the entire industry will be coming together for several days of learning that for the first time will include an expanded look at the exploding world of cable advertising.

For years, the CAB hosted its stand-alone event, and we're thrilled to be bringing our content to the broader cable marketplace.

An all-industry "Immersion" best describes the opportunity for the top ad sales pros that will be out in force at the 2007 Cable Show.

Those who attend will quickly realize the competitive advantages that will come from seizing the three-day opportunity to get neck-deep in all that is transforming the cable and video businesses.

That isn't speculation—it's a promise.

The sheer size of the Cable Show and the obvious "who's who" in attendance will generate a buzz for the general sessions like no other conference.

The energy coming from endless "firsts" and "fastest" demos in the exhibitor rooms, and the sheer number of new industries within the cable industry is a strong combination.

Every ad sales attendee will have many chances to exponentially increase their mastery of the full cable business and the full suite of advanced video applications affecting their markets.

Part of the cable immersion experience for ad sales pros is the "best of both worlds" feel attendees will get from the CAB's integration into the Cable Show.

The annual highlights that CAB attendees have come to expect from our event will still be there: the always-intriguing President's Panel, a keynote address from



Sean Cunningham

an elite U.S. advertiser, the latest findings from our acclaimed Which Screen research fresh out of the field. Also on tap are sessions dealing with the most cutting edge advertising applications driven largely by cable technology. And there will be practical discussions with bottom-line implications today, such as our political advertising panel.

Of course we'll also be hosting our silver anniversary Cable Advertising Awards gala celebrating local cable advertising excellence on Tuesday May 8th.

As the cable industry has grown in size and scope, new players have also entered the video marketplace. Meanwhile, the targeted and passion-driven value cable advertising can deliver is more important than ever to advertisers.

In addition, the new VOD and ITV applications enable the industry to activate higher sales volume not previously available to companies just a few years earlier.

Cable advertising is a \$22 billion industry growing every year. As the competition for delivery continues, it will be our brands and delivery infrastructure that will help grow cable's bottom line.

We believe our integration into the Cable Show comes at a time when cable advertising is more important than ever to the industry.

We're confident the program we've assembled will be beneficial to anyone in the business.

We encourage everyone to visit our sessions, and I look forward to seeing and meeting as many of you as possible.

As the show's moniker provides, cable's success has no limits.

We're thrilled to be a larger part of it.

(Sean Cunningham is pres/CEO of the Cable Advertising Bureau)

*Source: Nielsen Galaxy, Idol Tonight Premiere Telecasts only AA (000) 3/14 - 3/28/07 8P vs 3/14 - 3/28/06 7P, Live Stream

Wednesdays
8p E / 7p C

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GUEST COLUMNIST

Making Metadata Into an Art Form

If you're anything like me, you're always amazed and dazzled by the cable innovations showcased at our annual confab, and this Cable Show is no exception.

Over the years, when cable visionaries like John Malone confidently predicted the future, it was sometimes hard to imagine those big ideas coming to fruition.

But we've surpassed those predictions and built a world where consumers are able to access and control (even create) all their entertainment and communications needs through cable.

Big ideas may come easy for some. But as you may know first-hand, it's the execution that's the real challenge, especially in today's fast-paced world.

That's one of the things we're supporting with our initiatives at CTAM, particularly in the world of cable On Demand.

It was once a big idea too: Consumers able to watch favorite TV shows and movies totally on their own terms. Now it's a reality in millions of cable homes. But there are numerous "behind the screen" execution issues being addressed by the CTAM On Demand Consortium.

In fact, one little-considered and most pesky detail has been managing the way hundreds of content choices are shown to the viewer.

In the world of linear television, remote-control-wielding viewers sample what's on by actually seeing it on the screen.

Simple.

In contrast, in the On Demand environment, the first presentation to the viewer is relatively uninteresting text. In the hands of skilled writers and designers, content descriptions can persuade a customer to choose a par-

ticular program.



Char Beales

Handled poorly, it can have the opposite effect. And as if that's not enough, the text supplied to the EPG in the form of metadata can look different on each of the multiple guides used by cable companies.

Picture this: A perfectly designed listing on one EPG can disintegrate (and does) into a mish-mash of truncated titles and copy on another.

So, how does a content provider turn metadata into persuasive art? In partnership with Anystream Media, the Consortium developed an answer: The EPG Simulator.

It's an online platform that lets creative people working at cable networks view their On Demand metadata exactly as it will appear down the line.

At a glance, over a secure Internet connection, copywriters and graphic artists can see whether and where they need to adjust language, abbreviations, copy and design formats so their creations look and perform perfectly, across the entire cable On Demand universe.

According to Eric Kessler, the president of sales and marketing for HBO, the EPG Simulator is "a huge step forward in allowing networks to finally see exactly what the viewer will see."

We describe it as a shared resource that advances the On Demand business for everybody who participates—and that's a beautiful thing.

On Demand is a big idea that has opened up an endless realm of possibilities in television, but realizing its promise depends on solving the seemingly minor, but oh-so-critical implementation challenges.

The CTAM Consortium is proud to present this solution, giving the artists of On Demand a better canvas on which to create and further enhancing the customer experience.

Now it's on to the next innovation.

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