

CableFAX Daily™

Tuesday — May 26, 2009

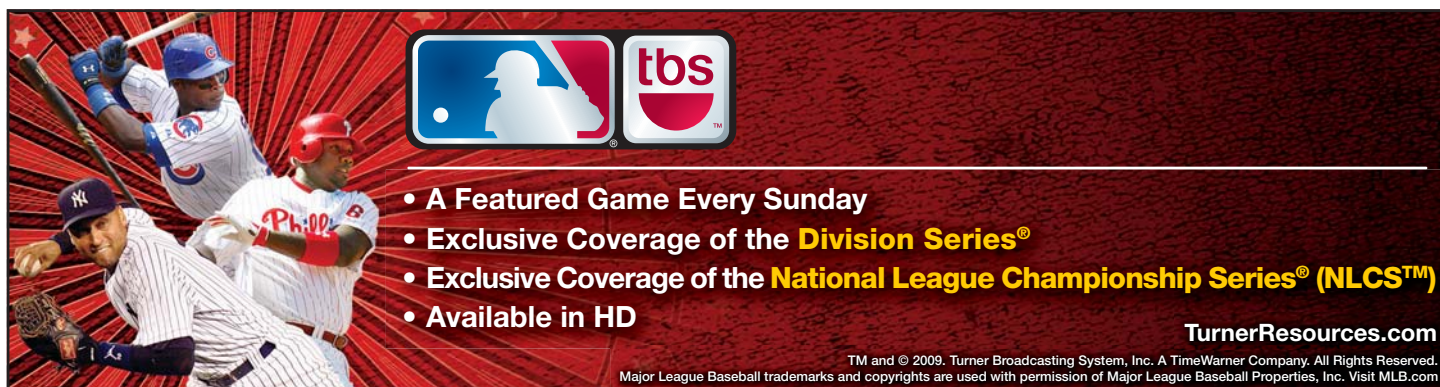
What the Industry Reads First



Volume 20 / No. 098

Tickle Time: Television is Bringing Funny Back

The signs are there. Networks that haven't had an original comedy in years are dusting off the laugh tracks. **ABC** announced an unheard of 4 new comedy series at its upfront. Move over drama and reality TV; comedy's making a comeback. **Lifetime** is a prime example. After launching its 1st scripted original comedy in a decade last year ("Rita Rocks"), the net's picked up a scripted series starring comedian *Sherri Shepherd* and is considering other comedy projects. Lifetime evp, ent *JoAnn Alfano*, the creative driving force behind shows such as "30 Rock" and "Will and Grace," said her net's female viewers love comedy. But over the years, Lifetime hasn't really needed to develop its own because it could draw from a deep pool of classic hits, like "Frasier," that bring in strong ratings. The problem is that the amount of comedy in production over the past 10 years has shrunk significantly, and not all of those fit Lifetime's brand (ie, "The Office," "Entourage"). "What you should do, and what we're doing, is try to do it yourself," Alfano said. "Try to develop comedies that fit the voice of your brand, which you know better than anyone else." Cable has a leg up on broadcast when it comes to launching a sitcom in one aspect because it can strip the show to encourage more sampling. "With 'Rita Rocks,' we were able to premiere it and strip it 5 nights a week. The duplication of audience is so small that you can air those episodes again and virtually hit the same number," she said. **TBS** has also padded a lineup of acquisitions with an increasing slate of its own comedies, such as "My Boys" and "The Bill Engvall Show." Like Lifetime, *Michael Wright*, evp, head of programming for **TBS**, **TNT** and **Turner Classic Movies**, cited the need to develop programming because of the decline in comedies on broadcast. But TBS is also looking to use its acquisitions to build a successful original lineup, much like **TNT** did with "The Closer," which was developed with the net's "Law & Order" audience in mind. The same is true with upcoming TBS animated series "Neighbors from Hell"—created as a complement to "Family Guy." "TBS in terms of how we use original scripted comedies is kind of where TNT was a couple of years ago. TNT has now moved original programming to the forefront, but a couple years ago we had a couple series that we were very proud of, they did terrific ratings for us, but they were as much brand extenders as ratings drivers," Wright said. Even nets that aren't funny by nature are finding that humor pays off. **Sci Fi Channel's** most-watched scripted series "Eureka" is what the net likes to call a "dramedy." It has worked so well that Sci Fi is using the July 7 premiere of new dramedy "Warehouse 13" to officially flip the switch and become SyFy. But Sci Fi evp, original programming *Mark Stern*, said the net hasn't ruled out straight-up comedy. "I don't believe there's this monolithic sci fi viewer who only likes their 'Star Trek' straight up," said Stern, who has half-hour comedies in development but nothing greenlight ready yet. "I feel like we've proven that with reality. I think we've shown [it] with 'Ghost Hunters,' 'Destination Truth' and a lot of the other things that we've done... If it's done in a certain way, our viewers will come to it, and I definitely feel the same way about single-camera comedy. I think we just have to figure out what that might be."

DTV Doings: In what could be a bad omen for June 12, the **FCC**-coordinated DTV soft test Thurs resulted in a single-day record of 55K calls to the FCC's national help line. Prior to the test, the center had averaged 15K calls/day



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since May 1. The bulk of callers (51%) were seeking info about the govt's converter box coupons. Another 15% were concerned about reception issues in their area, and 10% needed instructions on installing a converter box. Chicago had the highest volume of calls (1310), followed by NYC (1277) and Dallas-Ft. Worth (764). "This soft test did exactly what it was supposed to do," said acting FCC chmn *Michael Copps*. "It was a wake-up call for consumers who are unprepared, alerting them to the fact that they need to take the necessary steps before the June 12 DTV transition."

Carriage: RFD-TV inked a distribution deal with **Time Warner Cable**. -- **Cox** added 21 high-def channels in Hampton, VA, including **Bravo HD, E! HD, FX HD** and **MTV HD**.

Research: 58% of women in **Solutions Research Group's** Women & Digital Life study say they are spending more time on the Net, and 38% say the same about TV. 58% say TV is on in the background most of the time, with that most true for 25-39s. Women in the survey named the Big 4 broadcast nets as the ones they would keep if they had to live without the rest. The top cable brand listed was **Lifetime** followed by **Disney, Discovery, The Food Network** and **Nick**. Other tidbits: Internet use edges TV use during the 1st hour after waking, 47% vs 46%; the average age of a female Hulu viewer is 31; and the most popular video content on mobile devices is TV shows (33%) followed by movies (24%). -- As of Feb, one-third of US TV homes owned at least 1 HDTV, according to **Nielsen**, up from 29% in Nov and 19.3% a year ago. HD penetration is greatest among Asians (42%), followed by Caucasians (34%), Hispanics (32%) and African Americans (26%). Peripheral device penetration among HDTVs includes DVRs (36%), DVD players (71%) and gaming consoles (31%).

Online: **Hulu** will stream its 1st live concert ever when the **Dave Matthews Band** rocks the Beacon Theatre in NY on Jun 1. Also, the Website inked a deal for an unnamed distribution partner to stream the concert live as well.

Ratings: The premiere of "Southern Belles: Louisville" was **SOAPnet's** best reality series kickoff ever among total viewers (459K), women 18-34 (73K) and women 18-49 (205K). -- The Wed premiere of **Style Net's** "Clean House: Search for the Messiest Home in the Country" got a 0.56 HH rating and a 0.43 among women 18-49, its 2nd-highest series premiere ever.

Programming: **VH1's** summer slate includes "The T.O. Show" (Jul 27), chronicling the off-season moves of NFL receiver *Terrell Owens*, and "The Great Debate" (Jul 6), featuring pop culture debates such as who's better, the Beatles or The Rolling Stones? -- **Versus** forged a strategic partnership with online network operator **Yardbarker**, which will contribute a regular segment to the net's new series "Fanarchy" (Jun 7). Also, the pair is working on a video player that will feature clips and highlights from Versus' sports properties across Yardbarker's network of more than 700 affil sites.

People: **USA** upped *Ryan Sharkey* to vp, program acquisitions and administration.

Business/Finance: **ION Media Nets** said a NY Bankruptcy Court granted all of its initial restructuring requests, including continued use of cash on hand and access to an additional \$25mln of new funding from a group of secured lenders. ION said it's in active discussions to acquire more content for the '09-'10 season. -- **Playboy** shares soared 13.4% Fri after the *NY Post* reported that it's courting potential buyers with a \$300mln asking price—a more than three-fold premium to the company's approx \$96mln market cap. The Bunny has struggled in recent years. After CEO *Christie Hefner* resigned in Jan, Playboy's ent segment reported a 20% drop in 1Q rev to \$26.2mln as domestic TV rev fell 19% to \$13.3mln. -- **Cablevision** chmn *Charles Dolan* told shareholders Thurs that the Dolan family isn't considering another privatization attempt, according to the *WSJ*.

CableFAX Daily will publish a special supplemental Mid-Day Report, June 11, profiling the winners of the Sales Executive of the Year Awards and the Sweet 16—with special mention of the 2009 Hall of Fame Inductees. For event information and list of Honorees go to: www.CableFAX.com/SEOY.

A Generous Distribution of the Mid-Day Report Will Include:

- Printed copies at the event for all attendees • CableFAX Daily Subscribers
- Thousands more via PDF of the Mid-Day Report on CableFAX.com

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Artwork Deadline: June 5



CableFAX Week in Review

Company	Ticker	5/22 Close	1-Week % Chg	YTD %Chg
BROADCASTERS/DBS/MMDS				
BRITISH SKY:	BSY	28.36	0.60%	2.90%
DIRECTV:	DTV	23.71	(2.1%)	3.50%
DISH:	DISH	16.82	7.10%	51.70%
DISNEY:	DIS	23.70	1.30%	6.00%
GE:	GE	13.10	1.90%	(13.4%)
HEARST-ARGYLE:	HTV	4.48	(0.2%)	(24.9%)
NEWS CORP:	NWS	10.20	2.40%	7.70%

Company	Ticker	5/22 Close	1-Week % Chg	YTD %Chg
MSOS				
CABLEVISION:	CVC	19.19	5.00%	15.10%
COMCAST:	CMCSA	14.22	(1.4%)	(14.6%)
COMCAST SPCL:	CMCSK	13.33	(1.2%)	(16.3%)
GCI:	GNCMA	6.32	(9.6%)	(21.9%)
KNOLGY:	KNOL	7.89	3.00%	52.90%
LIBERTY CAPITAL:	LCAPA	13.53	6.00%	187.30%
LIBERTY ENT:	LMDIA	24.05	0.50%	37.60%
LIBERTY GLOBAL:	LBTYA	14.58	0.80%	(8.4%)
LIBERTY INT:	LINTA	5.65	3.30%	81.10%
MEDIACOM:	MCCC	6.11	15.70%	42.10%
SHAW COMM:	SJR	16.96	6.50%	(1%)
TIME WARNER CABLE:	TWC	32.28		
VIRGIN MEDIA:	VMED	7.33	6.10%	49.30%
WASH POST:	WPO	361.82	2.10%	(5.1%)

Company	Ticker	5/22 Close	1-Week % Chg	YTD %Chg
PROGRAMMING				
CBS:	CBS	7.01	4.60%	(13.2%)
CROWN:	CRWN	2.81	(5.7%)	(1.4%)
DISCOVERY:	DISCA	21.83	13.20%	54.10%
EW SCRIPPS:	SSP	1.78	6.30%	(19%)
GRUPO TELEVISIA:	TV	17.49	3.30%	17.10%
HSN:	HSNI	10.18	15.30%	40.00%
INTERACTIVE CORP:	IACI	15.47	3.50%	(1.7%)
LIBERTY:	L	25.76	2.20%	(8.6%)
LODGENET:	LNET	5.49	14.40%	684.30%
NEW FRONTIER:	NOOF	2.22	11.60%	30.60%
OUTDOOR:	OUTD	6.38	(14.9%)	(14.8%)
PLAYBOY:	PLA	2.87	7.90%	32.90%
RHI:	RHIE	3.14	(1.6%)	(61.3%)
SCRIPPS INT:	SNI	27.45	(0.1%)	25.10%
TIME WARNER:	TWX	22.86	(2.8%)	3.00%
VALUEVISION:	VVTV	0.74	13.80%	124.20%
VIACOM:	VIA	22.87	5.60%	13.70%
WWE:	WWE	11.79	4.40%	16.20%

Company	Ticker	5/22 Close	1-Week % Chg	YTD %Chg
TECHNOLOGY				
3COM:	COMS	4.11	(0.2%)	80.30%
ADC:	ADCT	6.80	2.10%	24.40%
ADVANTAGE:	AEY	1.74	5.50%	(2.2%)
ALCATEL LUCENT:	ALU	2.44	9.90%	13.50%
AMDOCS:	DOX	21.15	3.00%	15.60%
AMPHENOL:	APH	32.09	0.90%	34.00%
APPLE:	AAPL	122.50	0.10%	43.50%
ARRIS GROUP:	ARRS	10.66	3.50%	34.10%
AVID TECH:	AVID	13.09	6.00%	20.00%
BIGBAND:	BBND	4.96	(3.3%)	(10.1%)
BLNDER TONGUE:	BDR	1.68	7.70%	66.30%
BROADCOM:	BRCM	22.25	6.80%	31.10%

Company	Ticker	5/22 Close	1-Week % Chg	YTD %Chg
CISCO:	CSCO	17.90	(0.1%)	9.80%
CLEARWIRE:	CLWR	4.63	0.90%	16.60%
COMMSCOPE:	CTV	25.30	10.90%	62.80%
CONCURRENT:	CCUR	4.33		26.50%
CONVERGYS:	CVG	9.34	1.50%	45.70%
CSG SYSTEMS:	CSGS	13.06	(1.1%)	(25.2%)
ECHOSTAR:	SATS	15.91	(1.2%)	7.00%
GOOGLE:	GOOG	393.50	0.90%	27.90%
HARMONIC:	HLIT	5.19	0.60%	(7.5%)
INTEL:	INTC	15.05	(0.9%)	11.70%
JDSU:	JDSU	4.99	5.10%	34.80%
LEVEL 3:	LVL	1.15	9.50%	64.30%
MICROSOFT:	MSFT	19.75	(2.3%)	2.90%
MOTOROLA:	MOT	5.90	(0.2%)	34.30%
NDS:	NNDS	62.93		9.70%
OPENTV:	OPTV	1.59	3.20%	29.30%
PHILIPS:	PHG	19.15	2.80%	5.60%
RENTAK:	RENT	10.21	(1.4%)	(13.4%)
SEACHANGE:	SEAC	6.60	5.60%	(8.5%)
SONY:	SNE	25.79	(2.6%)	17.90%
SPRINT NEXTEL:	S	5.16	2.20%	182.00%
THOMAS & BETTS:	TNB	29.38	(2.8%)	22.30%
TIVO:	TIVO	6.91	(7.9%)	(3.5%)
TOLLGRADE:	TLGD	5.18	1.80%	8.40%
UNIVERSAL ELEC:	UEIC	19.70	(1.9%)	21.50%
VONAGE:	VG	0.43	(8.5%)	(34.8%)
YAHOO:	YHOO	14.98	0.50%	22.80%

Company	Ticker	5/22 Close	1-Week % Chg	YTD %Chg
TELCOS				
AT&T:	T	23.68	(4.8%)	(12.6%)
QWEST:	Q	4.01	(2%)	14.60%
VERIZON:	VZ	28.81	(2.7%)	(10.9%)

Index	Value	% Chg	YTD %Chg
MARKET INDICES			
DOW:	INDU	8277.32	0.10% (5.7%)
NASDAQ:	COMPX	1692.01	0.70% 7.30%

WINNERS & LOSERS

THIS WEEK'S STOCK PRICE WINNERS

COMPANY	CLOSE	1-WK CH
1. MEDIACOM:	6.11	15.70%
2. HSN:	10.18	15.30%
3. LODGENET:	5.49	14.40%
4. VALUEVISION:	0.74	13.80%
5. DISCOVERY:	21.83	13.20%

THIS WEEK'S STOCK PRICE LOSERS

COMPANY	CLOSE	1-WK CH
1. OUTDOOR:	6.38	(14.9%)
2. GCI:	6.32	(9.6%)
3. VONAGE:	0.43	(8.5%)
4. TIVO:	6.91	(7.9%)
5. CROWN:	2.81	(5.7%)



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MaxFAX...

Emperor's Old "Clothes"

Or down the rabbit hole?

Interesting to watch the ratings validations scramble... cracks in a system built on universal acceptance of a favorite Kool-Aid flavor.



Paul S. Maxwell

Another, smaller ratings service will be investigated by the Federal Confusion Commission (while no one's really in charge?) for possibly, maybe, what if? under-representing

minorities.

And all the while, a consortium of major operators spends hundreds of thousands of dollars for guesstimates (really, to be fair, the only kind possible) but doesn't trust the numbers so they hire another outfit to "make sense" of the guesstimates.

And on the Web, one service reports traffic of some 42mln while a rival reports 8.9mln to the up-and-coming partial solution to video ads on the 'net test of antitrust in the world of big media. Gee, metering so close you can't tell who's right or wrong!

One "pill" (report) makes you tall...

One "pill" makes you small.

Not sure whether the entire media

world fell into Wonderland or just wants to forever relive a *Hans Christian Andersen* fable.

Random Notes:

• **Positively Cable:** Some big events coming up... May 28th reception for the departing—and we'll miss him—*Steve Villano* in New York City (invitation only and, as **Cable Positive** is so practiced, a fundraiser)... a backyard BBQ in New York on the 7th... **RENT** in Denver on the 10th... and, my favorite, **Positively Cable** in Denver on the 16th. Like **C-SPAN** and lots of other stuff the cable industry does good by doing good... and should get a little more credit than we do!

• **Memorial(s):** Hope you have/had a great Memorial Day... lots of milestones lately... **A&E** nets discovered a "Link" and had an online sale of 20% with free shipping for orders over \$75 (but what are we going to do during Fall Cable Connection when we can't go to an A&E party atop NBC HQ in NY?)... **Amazon** and **Discovery** have done their part to stimulate the (legal) economy... **Comcast** and the NFL re-started the game with a multi-year deal (wonder if *Brian* and *Steve* will take the footballer *Steve* to dinner anytime soon?—or vice versa? If so, I want to go, too... but I'll bet ALL of the attention is on *Glenn Britt* now)... *Dr John Malone* has been unusually active (again)... good guy

Carl Vogel got a new financial gig in sports... bipartisanship remains illusive ... as do new **FCC** commissioners... please take a moment to remember why we have a Memorial Day (once called Decoration Day... for the Purple Heart awarded to those who died in service)... so airlines beat cable and newspapers in a consumer satisfaction index survey; could be because so many people don't fly anymore (go **Cisco**?)... and **DirectTV** led the cable category? It is now officially the multiplatform business... the sky will fall in 2010—sort of, because of a lack of infrastructure maintenance. A report says the GPS system will fail—and male drivers will once again have to pass 6 service stations before asking directions... wonder if calling it **Rovi** will make the channels change faster?... for the news that counts (you decide!)—a look at the worst celebrity tippers, go to <http://www.foxnews.com/photoes-say/0,4644,7277,00.html>... it is not true that the next edition will be of cable executives.

• **125 Days and Counting:** Is the worst over, yet?

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Florida

Cable Connection

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CONNECT WITH INDUSTRY LEADERS
AS THEY DISCUSS THE **HOTTEST** TRENDS

SESSIONS:

IS FLAT THE NEW UP?

WHERE WILL THE NEW GROWTH COME FROM?

WEB 2.0 TODAY

BLOGS, TWITTER, FACEBOOK, MYSPACE...WHAT IS THE STATE OF WEB 2.0 TODAY?

THE NEW AGE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

HOW TO AVOID A MAJOR BREAK-UP

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