

CableFAX Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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High Tide: September is for HD Lovers

With **DirectTV** promising to rollout 70 new HD channels by the end of the month, programmers are racing to get their high-def signals out the door. **CNN** lit up **CNN HD**, a high-def simulcast, on Sat. No major carriage yet, but DirectTV has agreed to launch the channel in mid-Sept. On Mon, DISH Network became the 1st provider to offer History HD. Rival DirectTV won't be far behind, having committed to launch it later this month. Actually, when History announced the launch of the channel, it declared that DirectTV would be the first provider to carry it, perhaps illustrating how much the race to launch HD programming has heated up. Talks continue with cable operators for both channels, as well as the laundry list of other HD nets launching in the coming weeks. CNN HD will feature more than 60 hours/week of HD programming, with all its NY-based shows ("American Morning," "Lou Dobbs," etc) as well as select "CNN Presents" fare airing in HD. The next CNN-**YouTube** debate will even be in high-def, CNN vp *Bob Hesskamp* told us. It isn't cheap or easy moving to HD. CNN will gradually increase the amount of HD, in-the-field news reporting it does—which means not everything on CNN HD will be high-def. "We're putting cameras in the field where we think they could have the biggest impact," Hesskamp said. Also upcoming is "CNN Presents: Planet in Peril," a 4-hour doc filmed in HD across 4 continents (Oct 23-24). History Channel HD will feature a simulcast of the entire History lineup, including popular series like "Digging for the Truth" and "Ice Road Truckers."

Ford's Homecoming: *John Ford* is returning to his old home place, signing on as pres, gm of **Discovery's Military Channel** and **Discovery Times Channel**. Hmm... wonder if Discovery snatched him up to have him waiting in the wings if/when Jane Root leaves her Discovery evp, gm post? (After all, can Brits really stay in the States for much more than 3 years?). Fri was his last day at **National Geographic Channel**, which snagged him from Discovery in '03. Ford announced back in Mar that he would leave his evp, programming gig at Nat Geo to pursue launching his own production company, telling reporters then that he'd had no talks with Discovery. But 3 months later, Ford said he met with Discovery chief *David Zaslav* and plans soon changed. "David has a very compelling vision of what Discovery and its properties could be," Ford said. "His attitude is one of aggressive growth, dynamism, risk taking and making bold moves to take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves in this new media world. He's also a very pragmatic visionary... It's a mindset that I can really appreciate." *Clint Stinchcomb* will continue to lead Discovery's **HD Theater** and **Turbo Media**, a multiplatform initiative focused on all things motorized. With the *NY Times* no longer a partner in **Discovery Times Channel**, "we have to address what the channel is going to be going forward," Ford said, adding that he needs 60-90 days to figure out exactly where to take it. *The Washington Post* reported in May that Discovery was talking to **CBS** and other companies about possibly buying half of the channel. Ford said the Military Channel helped lure him back to Discovery. His father was a career naval

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aviator, and one of the productions he had hoped to tackle was a doc focusing on the Navy in the Pacific during WWII. That project may wind up finding a home at his new net.

It's a Jungle Out There: Only days after failing to reach a deal with **Apple** over video downloads for **NBC's** new TV season, **NBCU** has tapped iTunes competitor Amazon.com to serve that role. **Sci Fi's** "Battlestar Galactica" is among the NBCU broadcast and cable content now available through Amazon.com's digital video download service. Consumer incentive plans such as discounts on purchases of multiple NBCU series and multiple series eps of series will soon be available at the site, which also includes free pilot eps of NBC's upcoming fall series.

Help Us, Kevin: **EchoStar** in comments last week told the **FCC** that it won't have enough capacity by Feb '09 to simultaneously carry broadcasters' HD and standard-def digital signals. The agency could soon enact such dual carriage mandates. "It is critical to understand that EchoStar will not physically be able to transition all broadcasters from analog to digital at midnight on February 17, 2009," wrote the satcaster, adding that "even conducting the transition over a matter of many months would be a substantial hurdle." While noting an approx \$5K/customer equipment cost for each broadcast transition, EchoStar is asking the FCC to mandate broadcaster signal provision starting now and to stage broadcaster/MVPD summits to address related issues.

Competition: One-fourth of all **iPhone** adopters switched their wireless service to **AT&T** for access to the device, according to **iSuppli**, which forecasts 4.5mln '07 shipments of the phone and 30mln device sales by '11. The firm also said that the iPhone was the top selling smart phone in July, beating out the **Blackberry** series, the entire **Palm** portfolio and individual hand sets from **Moto**, **Nokia** and others. -- **AT&T** bowed a Web-based feature allowing parents to control the mobile phone use of their children. Limits may be set on a child's talk time and text messages, IMs and downloads. Access restrictions may be assigned to mobile Web sites.

First Score: Michigan's shocking loss to Appalachian State Sat on **Big Ten Net** became an instant classic, and **Fox** is making sure more people get to watch it. 16 FSNs planned to air a 2-hour version of the game Tues (Sept 4) night, complete with an exclusive interview featuring ASU coach **Jerry Moore**. **FSN Bay Area**, now controlled by **Comcast**, declined to participate in the replay. "We certainly hope the attention this game has garnered will lend a sense of urgency to the productive distribution conversations we're having with many cable operators," said BTN pres **Mark Silverman**. Comcast pointed out that the game would have been free last year, if not for BTN's formation, and reiterated its argument that very few subs have requested the net.

In the States: After rebranding its acquired Houston system in Jun, **Comcast** will institute an area price increase Oct 1, with the avg customer's total bill to rise 6%. The MSO said the change brings area pricing more in line with national norms and reflects its \$22mln investment in service enhancements. VOD will launch in Houston later this month.

Home Phoning: **Comcast** is trialing in San Francisco do-it-yourself installation kits for its digital phone service. Trials will continue in Boston, Philly and Denver within 6 months. From box opening to placing calls takes approx 30min. The MSO said the kits help slash installation costs but more importantly provide home convergence features. Included are 3 cordless hand sets offering access to local news and weather, plus horoscope information. Later the phones will allow access to Comcast.net email and Yellow Pages listings.

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Kids Menu: **Cartoon Net** launched the 15-week initial season of "Master Control," a cool convergence play allowing kids to align with peers online and ultimately to choose what airs on the net. Viewers may join 1 of 3 teams (stationed in virtual clubhouses) at **CartoonNetwork.com**, where votes will be tallied for the desired program to air Mon-Thur (5:30pm). Each Fri, the team casting the most votes decides that night's 4-6pm programming block

Technology: **Verimatrix** rolled out tech enabling cable ops to deliver IPTV services using their current plants. It's designed to allow avoidance of upgrade costs while reclaiming bandwidth. -- **Starz** will use **Motorola's** MPEG-4 encoding system for the launch of its new HD channels, **Starz Comedy**, **Starz Edge** and **Starz Kids & Family**.

Online: **RCN** passed to its HSD subs Sat the new live event-centric **ESPN360.com**. The broadband service kicked off this weekend a redesigned interface featuring simultaneous access to up to 10 live streaming events ranging from NBA games to rugby to polo. ESPN said the change spurred more requests for the service in a single day than ever before, although it failed to produce adoption by holdouts such as **Comcast** and **Time Warner Cable**. Meanwhile the service enhanced its strong relationship with telcos, joining with **Verizon** for a promotion that will earn 1 lucky fan a truck lease and \$25K. Verizon broadband subs may now hit **VerizonSurround.com** to answer 3 daily sports questions, and the greatest number of correct answers through Sept 19 delivers the prizes. -- **CSTV.com** struck up the band Sat, setting an all-time record of 1.2mIn (+27%) unique users for the day. College football's kickoff also helped garner 8.2mIn (+29%) page views, second-most ever. -- **WCSN.com** inked a content distribution pact with **FOXSports.com on MSN**, making WCSN's Olympic-style and world championship event videos available to the site and **MSN Video** through a branded channel.

Programming: **Fred Dressler** may not be the only one **Retirement Living TV** coaxes out of retirement (*Cfax, Aug 14*). Former **CBS News** icon **Walter Cronkite** is in talks with RLTV to return to television, **cable360.net** reported Tues. And feisty RLTV, which celebrates its 1st birthday Wed (Sept 5), is readying to become a 24/7 network Oct 1, up from its 9am-5pm ET broadcast day, available on **Comcast CN8** and **DirecTV**. (More at cable360.net) -- **ScrIPps' Fine Living TV** inked a licensing deal with **Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia** to bring "The Martha Stewart Show" into its fold beginning Mon. -- **TBS** greenlit a 2nd season of "The Bill Engvall Show" and said the comedy series' eponymous star will host upcoming special "Blue Collar Comedy: The Next Generation" (Nov 17). -- **Starz Ent** continues its foray into original comedies, greenlighting a 2nd season of "Head Case" (Jan) and announcing "Hollywood Residential," which spotlights a struggling celebrity home makeover show on a flagging home improvement cable net. -- **Ted Koppel** will fraternize with the general population in **Discovery Channel's** "Koppel On Discovery: Breaking Point" (Oct 7), which delves into the reasons behind an overloaded and understaffed CA prison system. -- **America Channel** and the West Coast Conference forged a sports broadcast and content cooperation agreement featuring regional coverage of conference basketball and other sports.

Research: Hispanics and Asians continue to be the fastest-growing national segments of the population, with **Nielsen** reporting that TV HHs increased by 4.4% among Hispanics and 3.9% among Asians over the last year. The number of black HHs also grew faster than the national avg, 1.5% vs 1.3%.

Editor's Note: Nominations are open for **CableWorld's** 2007 Top 10 Places to Work in Cable. Go to <http://www.cable360.net/top10workplaces.html> to fill out the online nomination form; deadline for nominations is Mon, Sept 17. Nominations are also open for CableWorld's 2007 Most Powerful Women in Cable. Go to <http://www.cable360.net/topwomen.html> for the online nomination form; deadline for nominations is Mon, Oct 1.

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

On the Circuit: Comcast boss Brian Roberts was named one of the keynote speakers for CEA's '08 International CES (Jan 7-10 in Las Vegas). Also slated to keynote are Microsoft's Bill Gates, Panasonic's Toshihiro Sakamoto, Intel's Paul Otellini and GM's Rick Wagoner. - CTHRA's Achieving HR Excellence Symposium (Oct 23, Atlanta) has been approved for 5.25 continuing education credits for HR practitioners who have earned Professional in Human Resources, Senior Professional in Human Resources, or Global Professional in Human Resources certifications.

VOD: Comcast launched a free on demand channel featuring Notre Dame games, practices and interviews for the school's 26 varsity teams. It launched to Comcast digital subs last week in IN, IL and MI.

People: HBO vet John Hagerty and BendBroadband CEO Amy Tykesson will serve as board members of Cable TV Pioneers beginning next year. -- SCTE appointed Pam Nobles as dir, education and certification. -- Former MTV'er Sahar Elhabashi was named COO at Discovery Nets Intl. She reports to pres, CEO Greg Ricca and will be based in London.

Business/Finance: CBS' board authorized both a \$1.6bln stock repurchase program and a 14% quarterly dividend increase to 25 cents/share, payable Oct 1 to stockholders of record as of Sept 14.

CableFAX Daily Stockwatch

Company	09/04 Close	1-Day Ch	Company	09/04 Close	1-Day Ch
BROADCASTERS/DBS/MMDS					
BRITISH SKY:	55.40	0.53	AMPHENOL:	36.97	0.86
DIRECTV:	23.44	0.11	APPLE:	144.16	5.68
DISHNET:	34.13	0.53	ARRIS GROUP:	15.23	0.05
ECHOSTAR:	42.79	0.47	AVID TECH:	30.76	(0.07)
GE:	39.04	0.17	BIGBAND:	10.10	0.00
HEARST-ARGYLE:	25.55	(0.02)	BLNDER TONGUE:	1.29	0.03
ION MEDIA:	1.31	(0.02)	BROADCOM:	35.44	0.94
NEWS CORP:	22.25	0.51	C-COR:	11.25	(0.26)
TRIBUNE:	27.90	0.35	CISCO:	32.32	0.40
MSOS					
CABLEVISION:	33.82	0.27	COMMSCOPE:	57.48	0.88
CHARTER:	2.87	0.09	CONCURRENT:	1.36	0.03
COMCAST:	25.94	(0.15)	CONVERGYS:	16.30	(0.45)
COMCAST SPCL:	25.77	(0.09)	CSG SYSTEMS:	23.03	(0.09)
GCI:	12.62	(0.03)	GEMSTAR TVG:	6.52	0.42
KNOLOGY:	15.73	(0.07)	GOOGLE:	525.15	9.90
LIBERTY CAPITAL:	111.37	2.38	HARMONIC:	10.33	0.36
LIBERTY GLOBAL:	41.79	0.81	JDSU:	15.13	0.57
LIBERTY INTERACTIVE:	19.23	0.26	LEVEL 3:	5.31	0.08
MEDIACOM:	8.59	0.04	MICROSOFT:	28.81	0.08
NTL:	28.22	0.00	MOTOROLA:	17.20	0.25
ROGERS COMM:	42.97	0.00	NDS:	49.85	0.60
SHAW COMM:	23.10	(0.14)	NORTEL:	17.77	0.30
TIME WARNER CABLE:	36.60	(0.1)	OPENTV:	1.25	(0.06)
WASH POST:	772.11	6.46	PHILIPS:	39.79	0.24
PROGRAMMING					
CBS:	31.58	0.07	RENTRAK:	11.97	(0.39)
CROWN:	6.72	(0.01)	SEACHANGE:	7.23	(0.05)
DISCOVERY:	25.43	0.31	SONY:	49.07	1.29
EW SCRIPPS:	41.84	0.74	SPRINT NEXTEL:	19.10	0.18
GRUPO TELEVISIA:	26.79	0.73	THOMAS & BETTS:	56.12	0.73
INTERACTIVE CORP:	27.99	0.20	TIVO:	5.85	0.22
LODGENET:	25.76	(0.44)	TOLLGRADE:	10.12	(0.06)
NEW FRONTIER:	6.51	(0.31)	UNIVERSAL ELEC:	29.67	0.67
OUTDOOR:	8.94	(0.06)	VONAGE:	2.08	(0.03)
PLAYBOY:	11.04	(0.01)	VYYO:	5.84	0.03
TIME WARNER:	19.25	0.27	WEBB SYS:	0.06	0.00
UNIVISION:	36.23	0.00	WORLDGATE:	0.47	0.01
VALUEVISION:	8.27	(0.16)	YAHOO:	23.97	1.24
VIACOM:	40.04	0.59	TELCOS		
WWE:	15.23	0.08	AT&T:	40.28	0.41
TECHNOLOGY					
3COM:	3.67	(0.08)	QWEST:	8.88	(0.07)
ADC:	18.40	0.10	VERIZON:	42.67	0.79
ADVANTAGE:	7.05	(0.86)	MARKET INDICES		
ALCATEL LUCENT:	10.97	0.02	DOW:	13448.86	91.12
AMDOCS:	36.02	0.72	NASDAQ:	2630.24	33.88

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