

CableFAX Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Digital Pulpit: Zaslav Preaches New Media for Every Cable Net

David Zaslav is making the rounds as **Discovery's** incoming CEO, appearing at Tues' **UBS** media conference. He did a good job straddling Discovery and **NBCU**—appearing with an NBC logo on his shirt but answering questions about both companies. The big takeaway was that Zaslav will focus heavily on new media no matter where he hangs his hat. If cable nets don't explore other platforms and the Internet, someone else will, he said. "If ESPN was just a sports cable channel today, it would be a fraction of the value that ESPN brings," Zaslav said. "If it was just a cable channel, I think you could argue that it wouldn't have that much value in 10 years... **History.com** in a few years should be worth as much as the **History Channel**." He said it's unclear how best to monetize these businesses (he doesn't see advertising alone as the answer), but he believes content owners have an advantage. He said NBCU decided to be a big content owner and take all of its content "out for a ride" on VOD, **iTunes**, etc, with the goal of making a big return. "The challenge I've been fighting at NBC is to take that content to those platforms, but get paid a fair value for what that content provides... We're having a ton of meetings with all these players because we recognize there's an opportunity for both of us," he said. "We don't know how to split the baby yet, but it's another bite of the apple." Zaslav said the cable industry should create a uniform interactive platform including interactive elements for commercials nationwide. Unlike with VOD, programmers and operators would argue over how to split "pure incremental" money with such a model, he said, adding that operators seem receptive. The incoming Discovery chief also talked up brand vs ratings, noting that a small, niche audience in cable could bring enormous value from both a CPM and cable operator perspective. "If you try and make some of these niche channels too broad [to bring in more viewers], you're going to get outside what you are," Zaslav said.

Lost In Translation: A&E's 'Sopranos' Punch Less But Powerful

During **HBO's** "Curb Your Enthusiasm," *Julia Louis-Dreyfus* tells *Larry David* she wants a show on HBO so she can say the f-word whenever she desires. It gets more laughs, David jokes. While that's debatable, it's hard to downplay the importance of the word and other colorful language to the tone of "The Sopranos." *Tony Soprano* lives fast and hard in a dangerous existence. His language, ripe with expressions that make even longshoremen blush, reflects that reality. As do frequent sexual escapades. Beyond the shock value of bad language, part of the original series' charm is Tony and *Paulie Walnuts'* mix of street smarts with book knowledge, reflected in a vernacular where profanity dominates, but SAT words slip in. The lack of the f-word and the muted sexual atmosphere in **A&E's** cleaner series (starts Jan 10, 9pm) is a devastating blow, but it's not fatal. That's because the story lines of cable's groundbreaking series remain, as does the fine ensemble and the contradictions in Tony's work and home life and his uneasy relationship with his mother. Yet the edginess is muted, based on 2 eps A&E provided. The network insists alternate takes and prerecorded

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alternative dialogue minimized the need for editing. An assist goes to the violence, whose random regularity was compelling in the original. It still is. We'll guess A&E's version will appeal most to newcomers, who'll be able to accept Tony and entourage, particularly *Christopher Moltisanti* and Paulie Walnuts, administering profanity-free beatings, instead using words like "freakin' jerk" and "asshole." Not that A&E's series will be on *Kevin Martin's TiVo*. About 60 seconds into ep 1 there's dialogue about "breaking balls" and "shoving" something "up" someone's "ass;" 10 minutes in and Tony reminds that "shit rolls downhill." The question is, did A&E have the good luck to step in it when it paid \$2.5mln per ep?

At the Portals: FCC commish *Robert McDowell* said he can quickly get up to speed on the **AT&T-BellSouth** merger if the agency's gen counsel calls him in. The Republican made the comments at a **Credit Suisse** investor conference Tues, noting he hopes "my colleagues would proceed along a similar path" as previous deals, according to news reports. Meanwhile, AT&T CFO *Rick Linder* said he was hopeful the FCC would approve the merger at its Dec 20 meeting.

Higgins Memorial: B&C announced that a memorial will be held in NYC on Dec 12 for its late business editor *John Higgins*, who passed away last month after suffering a heart attack. The memorial will be held at The Lodge at **MTV Networks** from 6:30 pm to 9 pm. To RSVP, contact *Denise Galarza* at 212/258-8572 or denise.galarza@mtvstaff.com. Names will be placed on a list for admittance.

Gaming: In the wake of Fear.net and Ziddio.com, **Comcast** is taking its *GameInvasion.net* gaming Website beyond its portal and making it available to everyone. The site, which is dedicated to information about gaming, features a new interface and is more video centric. It continues to be ad-supported, but the ad model has expanded. Another new element is a deal with **Major League Gaming** to air its TV show "MLG Pro Circuit" (currently on USA) on VOD and on the site. -- Another pro league, the **World Series of Video Games**, signed programming deals with **CSTV** and **VOOM's Gameplay HD**. CSTV will produce and air the league's 1st circuit final as part of a 5-week series beginning Jan 21 (9pm ET). *Gameplay HD* continues its league coverage this month with coverage of events in KY, TX and Sweden, and additional eps will air in Feb.

Big Cheese: Slated to enter the cable game in Aug, the **Big Ten Network** announced former Michigan Wolverine and **ABC Cable Nets Group** svp/GM *Mark Silverman* as its 1st pres. **Fox Sports Nets** pres *Bob Thompson* declined to give specifics concerning any signed carriage deals, although **Fox Cable** pres, affil sales and marketing *Lindsay Gardner* said in Oct (*Cfax*, 10/16) that deals with up to 5 national carriers are already done. Thompson did say the net seeks expanded basic carriage within the conference footprint, and any carriage outside, save for sports tiers.

Online: **WE tv** unveiled an online store at we.tv/shop, offering merch such as series DVDs, books and pet products.

Ratings: **ESPN** (2.6 HH rating/2.35mln HH delivery) was on top once again last week, followed by **USA** (2.1/1.95mln) and **Disney** (2.1/1.91mln). **TNT** (2.0/1.81mln) notched 4th, while **Hallmark Channel** (1.8/1.34mln) cracked the weekly top 5 by sending "The Christmas Card," the week's 4th-ranked cable telecast. -- **Brag Book:** **NFL Net's** 2nd live telecast was the week's 2nd-ranked telecast, earning a 5.2 coverage rating and averaging 2.03mln viewers.

Programming: *Sigourney Weaver* will narrate **Discovery Channel's** "Planet Earth," debuting Mar 25 (8pm) and airing on consecutive Sun's through Apr 22. 70 camera operators spent over 2K days in more than 200 locations to shoot series footage, including a snow leopard hunting in the Himalayas and a Blue Bird of Paradise performing a mating ritual.

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

-- MASN inked a deal to become the official RSN of **Georgetown Basketball** and will televise at least 10 games during the '06-'07 season.

New Class: Nick Jr and Noggin are blending their creative and management teams into **Nickelodeon Preschool**, and *Brown Johnson* was named evp/exec creative dir, Nick Pre, and GM, Noggin. *Teri Weiss* was promoted to svp, development and production, Nick Pre, for which *Angela Leaney* was name svp/creative dir.

Obit: Sad to report that **TV One's** 1st gen counsel, *John Jones*, died Sun of a heart attack. He was 38. Jones left TV One a couple years ago to rejoin TV One backer **Radio One**. A funeral is set for Thurs in Capitol Heights, MD.

People: **Biography Channel** svp, gm *Tom Heymann* will leave at year-end to pursue other opportunities.

A&E TV Nets evp, gm Bob DeBitetto will take over day-to-day operations. -- **Comcast** promoted *Joseph Gamble* to svp, central CA.

Business/Finance: Live and TV Entertainment, and digital media, helped **WWE's** 2Q rev grow 8% to \$96.2mln, although net income fell 11% to \$10.4mln. Live and TV Ent rev inched up 2% to \$64.3mln while digital media rev surged 51% to \$6.5mln. Rev from TV rights increased 7% to \$21.8mln, and PPV rev slipped 1% to \$18.6mln.

CableFAX Daily Stockwatch

Company	12/05 Close	1-Day Ch	Company	12/05 Close	1-Day Ch
BROADCASTERS/DBS/MMDS					
BRITISH SKY:	41.63	0.06	AVID TECH:	39.74	0.41
DIRECTV:	23.15	0.35	BLNDER TONGUE:	1.79	(0.05)
DISNEY:	34.20	0.76	BROADCOM:	33.81	0.41
ECHOSTAR:	37.49	0.50	C-COR:	10.27	0.06
GE:	35.27	(0.12)	CISCO:	27.04	(0.21)
HEARST-ARGYLE:	25.81	0.06	COMMSCOPE:	31.40	(0.25)
ION MEDIA:	0.50	(0.1)	CONCURRENT:	1.89	0.03
NEWS CORP:	21.97	0.07	CONVERGYS:	24.10	0.00
TRIBUNE:	32.42	0.17	CSG SYSTEMS:	27.31	(0.35)
MSOS					
CABLEVISION:	28.37	0.34	GEMSTAR TVG:	3.24	(0.01)
CHARTER:	3.09	0.31	GOOGLE:	487.00	2.15
COMCAST:	41.83	1.00	HARMONIC:	7.78	0.02
COMCAST SPCL:	41.52	0.86	JDSU:	17.98	(0.34)
GCI:	15.17	(0.2)	LEVEL 3:	5.38	(0.22)
KNOLOGY:	9.92	(0.07)	LUCENT:	2.55	(0.02)
LIBERTY CAPITAL:	89.00	(0.26)	MICROSOFT:	29.13	(0.2)
LIBERTY GLOBAL:	27.70	0.01	MOTOROLA:	22.02	0.05
LIBERTY INTERACTIVE:	23.02	0.30	NDS:	47.98	(1.12)
MEDIACOM:	8.40	0.21	NORTEL:	22.19	1.31
NTL:	24.88	(0.56)	OPENTV:	2.37	(0.08)
ROGERS COMM:	60.84	(0.25)	PHILIPS:	37.11	(0.12)
SHAW COMM:	31.05	0.14	RENTRAK:	14.86	0.66
TIME WARNER:	20.56	0.09	SEACHANGE:	8.49	0.14
WASH POST:	728.45	(1.55)	SONY:	39.61	(0.17)
PROGRAMMING					
CBS:	30.95	0.75	SPRINT NEXTEL:	19.50	(0.23)
CROWN:	3.11	(0.02)	THOMAS & BETTS:	53.23	0.49
DISCOVERY:	15.17	0.09	TIVO:	5.67	(0.04)
EW SCRIPPS:	50.18	1.06	TOLLGRADE:	8.73	0.08
GRUPO TELEVISIA:	27.54	0.39	UNIVERSAL ELEC:	21.65	0.56
INTERACTIVE CORP:	37.00	0.35	VONAGE:	6.75	(0.09)
LODGENET:	23.31	0.31	VYYO:	4.09	0.08
NEW FRONTIER:	9.01	(0.12)	WEBB SYS:	0.04	(0.01)
OUTDOOR:	12.95	(0.06)	WORLDGATE:	1.48	0.09
PLAYBOY:	11.55	(0.1)	YAHOO:	27.43	0.54
UNIVISION:	35.43	0.01	TELCOS		
VALUEVISION:	13.29	0.03	AT&T:	34.68	0.44
VIACOM:	38.28	(0.27)	BELLSOUTH:	45.50	0.65
WWE:	17.00	0.86	QWEST:	7.78	(0.07)
TECHNOLOGY					
3COM:	4.13	(0.07)	VERIZON:	34.58	(0.27)
ADC:	13.98	(0.03)	MARKET INDICES		
ADDVANTAGE:	4.24	(0.05)	DOW:	12331.60	47.75
AMDOCS:	38.37	(0.55)	NASDAQ:	2452.38	3.99
AMPHENOL:	68.74	0.71			
ARRIS GROUP:	11.94	0.04			

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