

CableFAX Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Happy Holidays: Werner, Baker and Dubuc Have Merry Monday

A few cable execs got nice holiday presents on Monday in the form of new job prospects. Perhaps the biggest gift went to **Liberty Global's Tony Werner**, who **Comcast** announced would succeed *David Fellows* as CTO at month's end. (Fellows announced his retirement earlier this year). "Tony's wealth of engineering and technology experience will be crucial as we leverage our fiber network and IP technology to deploy advanced, integrated services," said Comcast Cable pres *Steve Burke*. Werner has more than 25 years of engineering and technical management experience, having held senior management positions with **Qwest Communications, Aurora Networks, TCI/AT&T Broadband, Rogers Communications, and RCA Cablevision Systems**. Second on the gift list was *Bridget Baker*, who **NBC Universal** upped to pres, NBCU Television Networks Distribution, effective immediately. She now oversees distribution over cable/telco, satellite and wireless, filling much of the void soon to be left by *David Zaslav*, who will leave early next year to become **Discovery Communications** pres/CEO (*Cfax*, 11/17). Baker will report directly to NBCU CEO *Jeff Zucker*, who called her "one of the most respected and experienced television executives, with strong relationships throughout the industry." Those reporting to Baker include *Henry Ahn*, svp, cable network distribution; *Jodi Brenner*, svp, legal and business affairs; *Mark Hotz*, svp, marketing; *Alyssa Donelan*, vp, communications; and *Erica Goldman*, vp, events and marketing. Baker won't oversee new media initiatives, which now falls under Zaslav's domain. That remains under svp, new media/CFO *Jean-Briac Perrette*, for now—but NBCU said it will announce "further organizational changes to areas of responsibility under Zaslav" in the future. Last but not least on the Mon gift list was **A&E** svp, non-fiction programming and new media content *Nancy Dubuc*, who will take the reigns at **The History Channel** following Mon's announced year-end departure of long-time History pres *Dan Davids*. In her new role, Dubuc will become History's evp/GM and also oversee **History International, The History Channel en español** and **Military History Channel**. A&E pres/CEO *Abbe Raven* said Dubuc will focus on expanding the History brand into multiple platforms, such as online, and "making the History experience a 360 experience." Raven said it's premature to discuss content changes, although she expects Dubuc's fresh perspective and multiplatform initiatives to help expand History's viewership to a "slightly younger audience." Dubuc has a tough act to follow: under Davids, History surpassed 90 million subscribers, garnered 13 Emmy awards and won 4 Peabody awards. No reason was given for Davids' departure, which had been rumored for months, but Raven said it was voluntary and she expects him to be "extremely successful" in his next venture.

New Doubles Team: The **US Tennis Association** has invested an undisclosed amount in **The Tennis Channel**, the pair announced Mon. The deal gives the USTA an active role in the net's direction, and will serve as a platform to help grow the sport, they said. The pact is another forehand winner for the net, following the multi-year agreement it forged this summer (*Cfax*, 8/25) with the Federation of French Tennis to telecast French Open action.



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Undecided: FCC cmsr *Robert McDowell* hasn't decided whether to participate in the **AT&T-BellSouth** merger proceedings. In a statement, he said he's "reviewing" FCC genl counsel *Samuel Feder's* finding that he is authorized to vote (*Cfax*, 12/11). While myriad parties await McDowell's decision, **Rep John Dingell** (D-MI), the ranking member of the Cmte on Energy and Commerce, said "these matters raise serious questions of both ethics and propriety... It has been reported that parties to the transaction feel that Commissioner McDowell's presence will have an impact on the outcome. That is a common effect of conflicts of interest." Meanwhile **Stifel Nicolaus** expects McDowell to join the proceedings and believes his participation would make "it even more unlikely that the deal will somehow be rejected." The firm also said that while an FCC vote on the merger may occur at the commission's Dec 20 meeting, there is a "significant possibility" of a delay until Jan due to holidays and the deal's complexity.

Competition: **Verizon** vice chmn/pres *Lawrence Babbio* announced plans to retire from the telco by the end of 1Q07. Babbio currently oversees the **Verizon Business** and **Verizon Telecom** business units. -- **DISH** signed on as a primary sponsor of **Roush Racing's** teams in the NASCAR Busch Series and the NEXTEL Cup Series. 9 Roush drivers including *Matt Kenseth* and *Greg Biffle* will form the "DISH All-Stars" team, which will represent the satcaster in all 35 '07 Busch races and a number of NEXTEL races. -- **Verizon** launched **here!** on its FiOS TV service as a subscription net, and net subs will also receive here!'s VOD service.

Editor's Note: As you prepare for **CTPAA's** Forum, make sure you enter your best public affairs shows or PSAs in **CTPAA-CableWorld's** 4th annual Public Affairs Programming Awards. The awards will be presented during Forum in Washington, DC. Entries are due January 15. For the simple rules, please go to: www.cable360.net.

Carriage: **Time Warner Cable** has renewed and expanded its carriage pacts with **MTVN** and **BETN**. Included are new digital distribution rights for **MTV World**, **LOGO**, **MTV Tr3s**, **MHD**, and a full package of MTVN and BETN free VOD content. Meanwhile, Time Warner Cable will soon launch **Music Choice's** free VOD service "Music Choice On Demand" in L.A., NYC, Dallas and Cleveland. Roll outs to additional markets will begin early next year.

Online: Broadband entertainment firm **ClickStar** will launch this week touting digital distribution agreements with **Sony**, **Universal** and **Warner Bros**. Full-length downloads of several hundred studio titles will be available at cstar.com, where 3 artist-created channels featuring *Danny DeVito* and *Morgan Freeman* will also be accessible.

Programming: **ESPN** inked a deal to provide exclusive multi-platform coverage of the '08 UEFA European Football Championship, a quadrennial soccer tourney featuring the top 16 European national teams. -- **Starz'** Thurs "Stars on Starz" will showcase actor *Will Smith*. Included will be an on-set preview of and an exclusive clip from Smith's new film, "The Pursuit of Happyness," due in theaters Fri, and movies "Hitch" and "Enemy of the State." -- The system works. Early last year Army vet *Mike Lyon* was up late watching **Discovery Times**—specifically its award-winning doc "Off to War," which followed an AK National Guard unit deployed to Iraq. Lyon contacted Off to War's makers *Brent* and *Craig Renaud* and told them he was organizing 50 vets who were running for '06 House seats. Tonight's "Taking the Hill" (9pm) is the gut-wrenching result. The Renauds sought to avoid politics and instead tell stories of vets returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. While the doc is political—the 4 vets profiled are Democrats and all experienced attacks on their service records—unfair, they said—it's not intentionally partisan. It ends with a shocking statement: the '07 Congress

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

will have fewer vets than any since WWI. -- **The Weinstein Co** and **Genius Products** have formed an alliance with **RHI Ent** to co-produce/co-finance TV productions, including series, miniseries and weekly movies.

On the Circuit: Online registration for **NCTA's** "The Cable Show '07" (May 7-9) in Las Vegas opened at the-cableshow.com. Those who register by Feb 18 will save \$100 on normal registration fees. -- *Amos Hostetter* has committed funds to **The Cable Center** that covers the production of TCC's distance learning program through the '07-'08 school year. The monies also allow more schools to participate in the accredited college course in communications and political science, produced jointly with **C-SPAN** and the **University of Denver**.

People: **Bravo** appointed *Cameron Blanchard* svp, communications.

Business/Finance: **DigitalBridge Comm**, providing broadband service to underserved communities, has raised over \$11mln in Series A venture financing and \$6.25mln in debt from **Comerica Bank**, and concurrently closed its acquisition of **Teton Wireless** and **Montana Wireless**, providers of wireless cable and Internet services in Idaho and Montana. DBC said it will add HSD service in these markets and expand to the Midwest and Southeast. The funding round was co-led by **RedShift Ventures**, **CNF Investments**, and **Novak Biddle Venture Partners**.

CableFAX Daily Stockwatch

Company	12/11 Close	1-Day Ch	Company	12/11 Close	1-Day Ch
BROADCASTERS/DBS/MMDS					
BRITISH SKY:	41.58	0.18	AVID TECH:	37.65	(2.02)
DIRECTV:	25.49	1.21	BLNDER TONGUE:	1.51	(0.02)
DISNEY:	34.52	0.13	BROADCOM:	34.20	0.08
ECHOSTAR:	37.53	0.70	C-COR:	10.79	0.22
GE:	35.22	(0.05)	CISCO:	27.11	0.13
HEARST-ARGYLE:	26.00	0.10	COMMSCOPE:	30.97	(0.36)
ION MEDIA:	0.40	(0.02)	CONCURRENT:	1.86	(0.04)
NEWS CORP:	22.35	(0.25)	CONVERGYS:	23.97	(0.08)
TRIBUNE:	32.35	0.17	CSG SYSTEMS:	26.98	0.06
MSOS					
CABLEVISION:	28.24	0.05	GEMSTAR TVG:	3.22	0.10
CHARTER:	3.31	0.04	GOOGLE:	483.93	(0.18)
COMCAST:	42.69	0.58	HARMONIC:	7.68	0.07
COMCAST SPCL:	42.46	0.67	JDSU:	17.51	(0.26)
GCI:	15.05	(0.29)	LEVEL 3:	5.95	0.13
KNOLOGY:	11.07	0.17	LUCENT:	2.55	(0.02)
LIBERTY CAPITAL:	93.65	2.04	MICROSOFT:	29.54	0.14
LIBERTY GLOBAL:	28.35	0.11	MOTOROLA:	21.23	0.14
LIBERTY INTERACTIVE:	22.84	0.13	NDS:	48.03	(0.18)
MEDIACOM:	8.10	0.01	NORTEL:	22.81	0.27
NTL:	24.40	(0.04)	OPENTV:	2.32	0.03
ROGERS COMM:	58.84	(0.47)	PHILIPS:	36.88	0.00
SHAW COMM:	31.05	(0.35)	RENTRAK:	15.93	1.09
TIME WARNER:	21.33	0.42	SEACHANGE:	8.85	(0.15)
WASH POST:	733.47	(1.91)	SONY:	40.41	0.31
PROGRAMMING					
CBS:	31.32	0.39	SPRINT NEXTEL:	19.43	0.18
CROWN:	3.03	(0.08)	THOMAS & BETTS:	49.98	(2.84)
DISCOVERY:	16.35	0.44	TIVO:	5.49	0.15
EW SCRIPPS:	50.34	(0.16)	TOLLGRADE:	8.90	0.27
GRUPO TELEVISA:	27.62	(0.08)	UNIVERSAL ELEC:	21.05	(0.35)
INTERACTIVE CORP:	36.18	0.39	VONAGE:	7.25	0.18
LODGENET:	23.03	0.75	VYYO:	3.98	(0.14)
NEW FRONTIER:	9.26	(0.01)	WEBB SYS:	0.04	0.00
OUTDOOR:	13.10	0.30	WORLDGATE:	1.41	0.01
PLAYBOY:	11.56	0.06	YAHOO:	26.49	0.15
UNIVISION:	35.42	0.03	TELCOS		
VALUEVISION:	13.10	(0.09)	AT&T:	35.18	0.21
VIACOM:	38.20	0.57	BELLSOUTH:	46.24	0.38
WWE:	17.00	0.27	QWEST:	7.69	0.03
TECHNOLOGY					
3COM:	4.07	0.03	VERIZON:	35.69	0.38
ADC:	14.04	(0.08)	MARKET INDICES		
ADDVANTAGE:	4.15	(0.1)	DOW:	12328.48	20.99
AMDOCS:	38.41	(0.14)	NASDAQ:	2442.86	5.50
AMPHENOL:	66.69	(1.48)			
ARRIS GROUP:	12.08	0.03			

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Symonds Says...

This past Sunday a few million people witnessed the passing of a legend as HBO aired this season's final episode of "The Wire," perhaps the finest show since the dawn of the cable era.

Now, normally one would write huzzas to a show early in its run, when the publicity is humming and public awareness is high. And I guess under different circumstances, I might have written my praises a few months ago when this season premiered.



Curtis Symonds

The problem is "The Wire" was not on my radar. I had never seen it. Oh, I knew it was out there, I knew it was on HBO, and I knew that it featured a large number of African Americans. But I also knew it was largely about crime, or the attempt to fight it, and that it would most likely be unsettling. I simply passed.

And my sense is, for many of you reading this now, the same holds true.

But for some reason – maybe it was the cumulative effect of the critical praise—I decided to dip my toe in the water. But, literally, within five minutes, I realized the writers were not going to allow me to wade at all. I had two choices; dive in head first or stay out of the water altogether.

The opening scene of the first episode may have been as compelling as any I've seen on television in ten years. I'll spare you the details, but suffice it to say it involves shopping at a hardware store, a high-powered nail gun, a young African American with a wad of bills and an aging white sales clerk.

Their exchange was unlike anything I'd ever seen on film; in one sense so bizarre, so full of impending menace as to be otherworldly; but in another sense, so ordinary, so genial and so full of mutual respect that I found myself slack-jawed.

However—and this is the key to "The Wire"—when it was done I had a strong sense of both the characters as people; neither of them all good or all bad, and neither of them two-dimensional, introduced simply as plot devices.

Therein lies the brilliance of "The Wire," and the reason that African Americans owe HBO and producer David Simon a tremendous debt of thanks. There has never been a show on television any more committed to portraying African Americans as real people.

Sure there are archetypes, but never do any of the characters get reduced to stereotypes. And with multiple story lines, there are an astounding 45 regularly recurring African American characters, each of them

as unique.

There are some who are honest; others who are deceitful. Some are cops; some are criminals. Some are brilliant; others plodding thinkers. They are young and old; rich and poor; straight and gay; optimistic and cynical. As you watch "The Wire," you behold a tableau of the African American experience, with characters so fully developed that if you closed your eyes you'd swear you can smell their after shave.

Look, when I was at BET, we took heat for not having content that reflected the African American marketplace as a whole. And, while I sensed we might have been able to do more in that regard, I always felt we were programming in way that balanced commercial interests and our public responsibilities. That was before I experienced "The Wire."

Do yourself a favor. You want to see diversity in action; true diversity played out in living color? You want to see why so many blacks feel television producers are clueless about what it means to be a contemporary African American? Wait for HBO to re-run this season of "The Wire." Or watch it On Demand.

Symonds says your world will become a much larger, more complex, and ultimately more human place.

Curtis Symonds can be reached at curtissymonds@yahoo.com.

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