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What the Industry Reads First

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Relaunched mun2: New Content Strategy, HD Expansion, 4K Plans

What better time to relaunch a network than during one of the biggest sporting events of the year? **NBCU's** Hispanic cable net **mun2** officially becomes **NBC Universo** on Sun, the day it airs the Spanish-language telecast of Super Bowl XLIX. **DirectTV** is the 1st pay-TV provider to offer the channel in HD as the net continues its talks with all of its distributors on additional HD carriage. Programming for the relaunched net will contain a wider mix of unscripted series, sports, entertainment and music. "We want to retain the DNA of what mun2 was for Latinos and make it a little bigger and inclusive and have a much broader appeal to the Latinos today," pres **Rubén Mendiola** told us in an interview. In addition, "we want to push the envelope a little bit" with programs that are more "daring and edgy." On the music front, the goal is to bring live events with a Latin flavor and to continue its delivery of popular music content. The net will telecast "Festival Viña del Mar," a major music festival in Latin America. On sports programming, the net wants to feature Latino athletes and "follow stars of tomorrow." The net's target demo is 18-48, with "a definite emphasis" on 18-34. "That's a very good place for us to be in," said Mendiola, who transferred to the net in May from **Comcast Cable**. Acknowledging that the Hispanic market is a little behind on HD, the exec said enabling HD in all markets is a priority this year. Despite the still ongoing HD expansion, the net, which owns Spanish-language rights of various major sports franchises including the Olympics, **NFL**, **FIFA** World Cups, **NASCAR** and **WWE**, already has its eyes on 4K. "Some of that [sports] content is going to come in 4K... We are going to provide it... The better it looks, the more people will enjoy it," Mendiola said. Parent Comcast already launched Xfinity 4K On Demand programming app for 2014 **Samsung** 4K TVs. When it comes to TVE, only desktop and laptop authenticated streaming is now available. With Hispanic viewers streaming more video content than non-Hispanics, the net will work to expand its authenticated offering to additional platforms. Full eps for original series are available the day after they air on TV. Viewers follow content and some content is best viewed in live, so "we need to be able to provide content in the way the public wants to see it," Mendiola said. The relaunch, first announced in Nov, aims to further align NBCU's Spanish-language nets with its English-language ones. The new logo will feature the NBCU peacock.

RealScreen: With most Hispanics in the US tracing their ancestries to Mexico and Puerto Rico, are cable nets limiting focus to Mexican and Puerto Rican-themed programming? Yes and no, according to execs at the RealScreen Summit late



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Thurs. It really depends on the network, said *Robert Friedman*, CEO of **Bungalow Media + Entertainment**. As Hispanic content increases, he said talent and programming based on various Latino culture will proliferate. At **El Rey**, it's all about storylines and bold characters, said programming vp *James Kanatas*, with no preference for one Hispanic culture over another. While **Discovery Comm's** Hispanic content seeks universal appeal, its primary focus remains Mexican characters, *Michela Giorelli*, vp of production & development at **Discovery Nets** Latin America/US Hispanic, acknowledged. Meanwhile, **NBC Universo** vp, audience and programming *Margie Moreno* said that while the net is very much focused on millennials, it wants to broaden the base by going after both 1st and 2nd generation Hispanics, she said. -- Owning content is extremely critical for networks like **WGN**, **Pop** (formerly **TVGN**), **Discovery Family** and **GSN**, their execs said at the RealScreen Summit Thurs. Owning allows nets to better monetize content domestically and internationally. "It's the only way for us to grow," said *Brad Schwartz*, pres of entertainment and media at Pop. For GSN, "in most cases we do like to own" with the exception of outside programs that have really good game formats, said *Amy Introcaso-Davis*, evp of programming & development. And owned or acquired, what matters the most to any content is authenticity, said *Sarah Davies*, vp of production and development at **Discovery Family Channel**. Meanwhile, nets are ramping up their unscripted slate. WGN will produce 2-4 unscripted programs including "Wrestling with Death" this year and plans 4-6 next year. The net is using Wrestling with Death, which revolves around an Arkansas family that runs a funeral home by day and a wrestling league by night, as a R&D project to see test audience preferences, said *Tom Huffman*, svp of unscripted at **WGN America & Tribune Studios**. "We like what **A&E** did," having scripted shows like "Bates Motel" and unscripted ones like "Duck Dynasty," he said. "They can stand side by side, though they don't go after the same audience. We kind of want to do the same thing. Our shows don't need to hit the same audience," he said. That's perhaps because "we don't know if the audience that watches scripted would watch unscripted. The net will produce scripted and unscripted on different nights, he noted. GSN is looking for breakthroughs with new unscripted shows that explore the subcultural world including body painting, said Introcaso-Davis. The net is looking at 10-12 new shows this year.

The Cycle of Life: The press went into a feeding frenzy over **Discovery Channel's** announcement Thurs that Shark Week will begin terrorizing us a full month earlier in 2015 (July 5 -12), but is it all really about ratings glory? After all, reports have long circulated that Discovery's programming contracts with **Comcast** expire mid-year. If we assume that means June 30, then the timing of the rescheduled Shark Week would seem... convenient, to say the least. Discovery wouldn't comment, but here's to this summer's negotiations going swimmingly for both sides.

Spectrum Dealings: The **FCC** closed its AWS-3 wireless spectrum auction last week, raising a record \$44.9bln. **Verizon**, **DISH** and **AT&T** were among 17 participating companies. Two entities related to DISH and/or its chmn *Charlie Ergen* won \$10bln of the spectrum, **Wells Fargo** analysts estimated. They noted Ergen won licenses in NY, Chicago, Boston, and LA.

Black History Month: **Al Jazeera America** will celebrate the Black History Month with new themed content throughout Feb. In addition, the net will launch #Branding Black, a month-long, social media campaign exploring multicultural marketing and the commercialization of "blackness." New programs debuting in Feb include 4 new eps of "Talk To Al Jazeera," special eps of "Real Money with *Ali Velshi*," as well as several "Race In America" stories.

Ratings: **HGTV** scored its highest rated Wed night in network history among 25-54 with a .75 rating and among W25-54 with a 1.07 rating. Helped by premiere eps of "Property Brothers" and "House Hunters," the net drew more than 6.7mln total viewers. Property Brothers scored a .85 25-54 rating at 9pm, making it the 2nd highest rated prime time ep for that series ever, while House Hunters at 10pm posted its best rating since Jan 2010 with a 1.05 among 25-54. House Hunters was also a top 10 cable program on Wed night.

On the Circuit: Sixteen new members will be inducted into the Cable TV Pioneers during its induction banquet to be held on May 4 in Chicago. The event will mark the group's 49th class induction. New members include *Kenneth Klaer*, svp, premises technology at **Comcast**; *Patricia Boyers*, pres/CEO at **Boycom Cablevision**; and *John Dahlquist*, vp of business development at **Aurora Networks**. -- **NAMIC** and **WICT** will partner on a joint survey for the next NAMIC AIM (Advancement Investment Measurement) and the WICT PAR Initiative (Pay Equity, Advancement Opportunities, and Resources for Work/Life Integration). The groups again will have talent consultancy **Mercer** conduct the joint survey. Funded through the **Walter Kaits Foundation**, the survey will focus on ethnic and gender diversity. The survey opened on Fri and will close after 12 weeks of data collection. Findings will be released on Sept 29 during Diversity Week.