

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Selling Authenticity: Ross Plans Changes at Discovery Channel

Only 72 hours on the job, *Rich Ross* on Thurs vowed that **Discovery Channel** under his watch will be “authentic” and suggested the net will step away from controversial fare such as mermaid mockumentaries and its recent show suggesting a man would be eaten alive by an Anaconda (he wasn’t). “I don’t think it’s actually right for Discovery Channel, and it’s something that I think has, in some ways, run its course,” he said of such programming during a **TCA** session. He went as far as to describe the Anaconda-themed “Eaten Alive” as host *Paul Rosolie*’s “right intention with packaging that was misleading... I think in his mind he thought that was actually possible, but I think the fervor of that story kind of got out of control.” Ross noted that his hiring this week of respected documentarian *John Hoffman* as evp, documentaries and specials, is part of his strategy to create more shows that are “delivering information that’s true but is also entertaining to me.” Ross said he also wants to expand the net’s audience beyond an older male demo to appeal to women and younger men “to rebuild the audience” so Discovery Channel is “for the whole family and not just the men in the family.” Ross also indicated that he won’t shy away from advocacy, noting that he wants to produce “something that impacts people to do something, to lean forward, not just to watch but to encourage them to do something.” And he described as “underutilized” stories about “history and history repeating itself” in order to highlight historical events that are “indicative of behaviors and situations and see if we can alter them in a positive way.” History is of course among those subjects that resonate internationally, and Ross said one of his 1st tasks is to meet with Discovery’s international execs to figure out “what opportunities might be adaptable here.”

Life after Title II: With **FCC** chmn *Tom Wheeler* all but decreeing at **CES** that Title II would be the **FCC**’s route to net neutrality rules, the question turns to what will the agency forbear. **NCTA** has said any reclassification should be coupled with immediate, nationwide forbearance from all of Title II’s obligations and restrictions. Adding a possible monkey wrench is Wheeler’s proposal to set broadband speeds at 25Mbps downstream/3 Mbps. That’s higher than the current 4Mbps/1Mbps definition, which was set in 2010, and above the 10Mbps definition the FCC just set for USF purposes. What does upping the qualifications of broadband have to do with forbearance? It largely removes DSL as a broadband option. “Sure, the FCC has committed to forbear from regulating prices. But Section 10 of the Act, which spells out the conditions and process for forbearance, generally conditions forbearance on the existence of competition, and specifically forbids forbear-

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ance in the case of ‘terminating monopolies,’” wrote **MoffettNathanson’s Craig Moffett**, noting that FCC stats show 55% of American HHs only have a single choice for broadband speeds of 25Mbps or more. And this could make the **Comcast-Time Warner Cable** transaction a bit trickier as Comcast would have a much larger share of the broadband market if DSL (generally around 10Mbps) isn’t counted. The proposed new definition for broadband is in a draft of the FCC’s upcoming broadband competition report. Meanwhile, **House Communications** subcmte chmn **Greg Walden** (R-OR) has already signaled a Title II approach won’t sit well. “The endgame should not be heavy-handed regulation that will lead to a bonanza of litigation and uncertainty,” Walden said, calling on Wheeler to work with Congress to enact a shared set of principles.

Beta Ad Exec Survey: Given **ESPN’s** impressive ratings, it’s not surprising to see that it leads the top-ranked basic cable nets where ad execs plan to increase spending in the next 12 months, with 50% of those surveyed by **Beta Research** saying they planned to up spending at the sports net. Behind it are **HGTV** and **USA** (each at 41%). **ESPN/ABC Sports** also ranked highest among ad execs’ evaluation on providing creating multiplatform opportunities with 66% giving it a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale. **Viacom** placed 2nd at 59%. **ESPN** also ranked as having the most desirable programming environment in which to advertise (79%), followed by **Food** (74%) and **HGTV** (70%).

Street’s Take on Sling TV: It’s been a few days since **DISH’s** announcement of \$20/month OTT service **Sling TV**, and the consensus seems to be that it won’t be totally life altering for the video world. “Recreating a synthetic package that includes Sling TV, **CBS** all access, **HBO GO** and enough broadband to satisfy the streaming needs would cost \$115mln, somewhat higher than cable’s \$110/month double-play package. Meanwhile, cable addresses a household/multiple stream vs a singular one,” said a research note from **Macquarie Securities**. That’s the same point **Comcast Cable** chief **Neil Smit** made at an investor conference earlier this week (**CFX**, 1/8). Analysts have noted that the total number of subs for Sling will likely be subject to an absolute cap, limiting the product to 2-5mln users. Don’t discount its impact completely. “No, we don’t think Dish’s new service will take the world by storm... but we do think this product will find a niche and that its pricing will be genuinely disruptive,” said a **MoffettNathanson** report. “Consumers now have the ability to craft their own bundle that might, just might, be ‘good enough.’ Combining a basic entry broadband and broadcast only package with a **Netflix** subscription or a password-shared **HBO GO** service may give consumers enough content at a reasonable price to render the bigger MVPD bundles unattractive.”

CES Notebook: “I don’t care where you watch our shows, just watch them.” **CBS** President/CEO **Les Moonves** made a strong case for his company’s OTT strategy at CES. More than a year into offering **CBS All Access**, he said during an interview with **MediaLink** chair **Michael Kassan** that while OTT does provide a boost at the retrans negotiating table, “the real reason for going over the top is not to circumvent the MVPDs. The reason is to make our content available to people using mobile.” Calling overnight ratings “virtually useless right now,” Moonves said, “the idea of success or failure is very different than it used to be. We are all a little more patient. Social networking as a measurement becomes more and more important.” Moonves also voiced strong support for programmatic advertising, a concept he said he’d been talking up this year at CES. “Let’s say your company wants to spend \$100 million. Why don’t you come to me with the money and I’ll make every platform available; we can devise a selling mechanism that will satisfy all your needs,” he said. “We have more inventory available as the days go by, and we’re looking for the best possible way to get best rates and best advertisers in best place so they can succeed.” -- Technology as a means to develop personal connections with consumers was top of mind for panelists at the CES Brand Matters session. “A direct relationship with the customer is really powerful and something we don’t have enough of today in our overall business,” said **Fox Networks Group** pres/COO **Randy Freer**. “The future gives us an opportunity to be much more customer focused. Citing the superfans of the 26-years-and-running show “The Simpsons,” he added, “We don’t have that one-on-one relationship with them, but we will.” **Jay Rasulo**, senior EVP/CFO, **Walt Disney Co**, said scalability and personalization go hand in hand. “For large companies it’s not a question of either-or. If you don’t both propagate large brands that are scalable, that’s not the way to go. But today personalization is a part of our lives.” Rasulo also highlighted the importance of matching the right technology and distribution path with your content. “If you can’t get your product distributed in ways the consumer wants to consume that product, you better think long and hard about creating that product in the first place.” - **Cathy Applefeld Olson**

Fox Ad Sales Cuts: **Fox Cable Ent Nets** ad sales pres **Lou LaTorre** is leaving his post in the wake of **Fox Networks Group’s** decision in Oct to combine broadcast and cable ad sales operations. Some 75 positions are being eliminated

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through layoffs and buyouts as part of the consolidation, with LaTorre among those taking a buyout. B&C first reported the news Thurs.

Programming: Discovery Life, which debuts Jan 15 in place of **Discovery Fit & Health**, used **TCA** to highlight new series “New Girls on the Block,” which follows a group of transgender women from Kansas City, Mo, Apr 2. -- **ABC Family** has greenlit 2 new, single-camera comedy pilots, “Kevin From Work” and “Tough Cookie.” Kevin from Work is about a man who professes his love to a coworker thinking he’ll never see her again, but then his job offer overseas is rescinded. Tough Cookie is about a young mom “who isn’t ready to parent and her daughter who doesn’t want to be parented.”

People: Frontier named *Stephen LeVan* as svp, video content and delivery. LeVan will have responsibility for Frontier’s national video partner relationships, including **DISH** and the broadcast and cable networks the company retransmits via its **FiOS** and **U-verse** platforms. -- **Discovery Channel** hired ex-**HBO** exec *John Hoffman* as evp, docs and specials. -- The **TN Supreme Court** announced that former **FCC** commish and TN native *Deborah Taylor Tate* will become dir, administrative office of the courts. -- *BJ Elias* was promoted to svp, distribution for **Fox Networks**. He will continue to report to distribution pres *Mike Biard*.

CableFAX Daily Stockwatch

Company	01/08 Close	1-Day Ch	Company	01/08 Close	1-Day Ch
BROADCASTERS/DBS/MMDS					
DIRECTV:	85.94	0.38	CONVERGYS:	20.20	0.23
DISH:	70.22	1.75	CSG SYSTEMS:	24.53	0.23
ENTRAVISION:	6.02	0.11	ECHOSTAR:	51.33	1.97
GRAY TELEVISION:	10.42	0.20	GOOGLE:	502.68	1.58
MEDIA GENERAL:	15.59	0.20	HARMONIC:	6.87	0.09
NEXSTAR:	47.79	0.21	INTEL:	36.69	0.67
SINCLAIR:	25.72	0.25	INTERACTIVE CORP:	61.53	1.47
MSOS					
CABLEVISION:	19.76	0.31	JDSU:	13.66	0.10
CHARTER:	162.94	6.15	LEVEL 3:	47.24	0.22
COMCAST:	56.38	1.20	MICROSOFT:	47.59	1.36
COMCAST SPCL:	55.93	1.20	NETFLIX:	334.45	7.25
GCI:	13.98	(0.03)	NIELSEN:	43.27	0.48
GRAHAM HOLDING:	871.66	28.65	RENTRAK:	69.46	(0.46)
LIBERTY BROADBAND:	49.29	1.61	SEACHANGE:	6.44	0.25
LIBERTY GLOBAL:	47.77	0.18	SONY:	21.56	0.03
SHAW COMM:	26.82	0.63	SPRINT NEXTEL:	4.16	(0.06)
TIME WARNER CABLE:	147.73	2.71	TIVO:	10.98	0.09
PROGRAMMING					
21ST CENTURY FOX:	35.68	0.36	UNIVERSAL ELEC:	64.81	1.10
AMC NETWORKS:	63.11	1.86	VONAGE:	4.09	0.20
CBS:	53.74	0.63	YAHOO:	50.23	1.64
CROWN:	3.50	0.09	TELCOS		
DISCOVERY:	32.47	0.26	AT&T:	33.50	0.33
DISNEY:	93.79	0.96	CENTURYLINK:	38.86	0.39
GRUPO TELEVISIA:	33.46	0.33	TDS:	24.58	0.83
HSN:	76.70	1.06	VERIZON:	47.18	0.99
LIONSGATE:	30.73	0.33	MARKET INDICES		
MSG:	74.88	0.81	DOW:	17907.87	323.35
SCRIPPS INT:	75.20	2.72	NASDAQ:	4736.19	85.72
STARZ:	28.35	0.11	S&P 500:	2062.14	36.24
TIME WARNER:	85.49	2.32			
VIACOM:	72.41	0.99			
WWE:	11.22	(0.13)			
TECHNOLOGY					
ADVANTAGE:	2.39	(0.01)			
AMDOCS:	47.05	0.74			
AMPHENOL:	53.91	1.03			
AOL:	49.62	3.50			
APPLE:	111.89	4.14			
ARRIS GROUP:	29.20	0.33			
AVID TECH:	14.47	0.45			
BLNDER TONGUE:	2.22	(0.13)			
BROADCOM:	42.10	0.75			
CISCO:	27.51	0.21			
COMMSCOPE:	25.67	UNCH			
CONCURRENT:	7.17	0.02			

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PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

TCA or SCTE?

I'll admit, maybe it's personal—recently I've become addicted to "The Big Bang Theory,"—but with all the talk of technology and science here, the opening frame of **TCA** seems mighty close to **SCTE**. Understand, TCA normally is a decidedly tech-free zone. For TCA, having more than 3 sets in your home is considered TV everywhere. TV critics aren't troglodytes, but their priorities are different. While cable is concerned with a seamless connection between platforms, TCA members are more interested in how tight that seamless chiffon *Eva Longoria* wore at yesterday's **ESPN** panel was. Yet for 24 hours here, critics have been offered a **CTAM**-sponsored briefing about TV Everywhere. TV is thought of as brain-destroying, yet some of **Nat Geo's** slate is cranium-heavy, with returning series like "Brain Games" joining "The Big Picture with *Kal Penn*," which looks at Big Data (March premiere). Another Nat Geo panel, for "American Genius," featured geeks like **Apple** co-founder *Steve Wozniack*, *Bill Nye 'The Science Guy'*, and *Biz Stone*, co-founder of **Twitter**. Clips shown included events in the lives of *Thomas Edison* and *Steve Jobs*. TCAs proximity to Hollywood means there's much talk about stars, but Wed that meant a discussion with "Cosmos" host *Neil deGrasse Tyson* about **NASA's** relatively puny budget—roughly half a penny of your tax dollar. deGrasse Tyson was on hand to promote Nat Geo's 1st talk show, a version of his podcast. There was even a Nat Geo Wild panel featuring a discussion about dogs' intelligence for "Is Your Dog a Genius?" (May 15)—dogs, like people, have different kinds of intelligence; some canines are better with numbers, others with math, for example. The scientific bent continued Thurs, when **Science Channel** gm *Rita Mullin* said, "science is on the rise... it's everywhere." She might have meant Science, not science, which just had its most-watched month, but that's not the point. And it's true, *Grant Reynolds*, co-host of Science's "What Could Possibly Go Wrong?," is a cross between a young *James Brolin* and *Christian Bale*. Still, briefly, the heady atmosphere of science and technology trended at TCA. - *Seth Arenstein*

Reviews: "Babylon," Thurs, 10p, **Sundance**. A police series whose protagonist is a PR person? Really? But it works, mostly, since the pace is rapid (*Danny Boyle* directs), the venue is Scotland Yard and the PR whiz is a young American (*Brit Marling*). *James Nesbitt* is the uptight police commissioner and *Bertie Carvel* is outstanding as Marling's PR rival. Front-line police, who seem to battle each other as much as they do the bad guys, are juxtaposed perfectly against the brass, in the Yard's relative calm. Throughout, social media churns as cameras watch. -- "Man Seeking Woman," premiere, Wed, 10:30, **FX**. The nightmare of dating becomes surrealistic for likeable schlep Josh (*Jay Baruchel*). The pilot is odder than eps 2 and 3, which deliver spot-on commentary. -- "Togetherness," premiere, Sun, 9:30p, **HBO**. *Amanda Peet* and *Steve Zissis* are an unlikely couple in this semi-serious look at suburban angst. -- Returning: A slew of notable series return, including "Girls" (Sun, 9p, **HBO**), with *Lena Dunham's* Hannah still whining, yet looking better; *Carrie Brownstein's* portrayal of a 'typical' commitment-phobic male in next week's "Portlandia" (Thurs, 10p, **IFC**) is remarkable; just when you thought "Banshee" (Fri, 10p, **Cinemax**) couldn't get more violent, this excellent guilty pleasure does; and "Shameless" (Sun, 9p, **Showtime**) continues to show how a poor, highly dysfunctional family ultimately can triumph. - *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable Rankings (12/29/15-1/04/15)			
Mon-Sun Prime			
1	ESPN	6	5678
2	USA	1.6	1511
3	DSNY	1.5	1476
4	TBSC	1.4	1362
5	DISC	1.2	1172
5	DSE	1.2	81
7	TNT	1.1	1096
7	HGTV	1.1	1041
7	FAM	1.1	997
7	HALL	1.1	920
11	HIST	1	960
12	AMC	0.9	898
12	A&E	0.9	821
14	TLC	0.8	771
14	FOXN	0.8	763
14	LIFE	0.8	756
14	ADSM	0.8	739
14	ID	0.8	682
19	FOOD	0.7	722
19	SYFY	0.7	704
19	FX	0.7	695
22	SPK	0.6	599
22	BRAV	0.6	575
22	NAN	0.6	554
22	TVLD	0.6	512
22	DSJR	0.6	470
22	HMM	0.6	327
28	APL	0.5	512
28	LMN	0.5	447
28	CNN	0.5	441
28	BET	0.5	426
32	EN	0.4	408
32	CMDY	0.4	396
32	MTV	0.4	332
32	SCI	0.4	317
32	WETV	0.4	311
32	GSN	0.4	310
32	FXX	0.4	304
32	H2	0.4	278
32	WGNA	0.4	258
32	BOOM	0.4	181
32	DFAM	0.4	25
43	ESP2	0.3	326
43	VH1	0.3	316
43	TRU	0.3	313
43	CNBC	0.3	306

*Nielsen data supplied by ABC/Disney

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