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What the Industry Reads First

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Comcast VOD: New Windowing Eyed as Usage Soars

VOD, once a place for movie rentals, has become a key platform for TV viewing. At least for **Comcast** subs. Some 70% of the MSO's subs use VOD each month and for more than 18 hours each month, *Steve Meyer*, the newly promoted vp of video strategy, told us. TV viewing makes up nearly 50% of total content viewing on Comcast's VOD platform today, he said. And TV viewing on VOD has been about catching up on previous eps. However, "a big thing we are seeing is... because there are so many new TV shows, customers are turning to video on demand first to discover new shows. We are seeing new shows outperform old shows significantly... Contribution of VOD viewing of new shows to overall viewing is getting bigger and bigger," Meyer said. Comcast has been a big supporter of "stacking," the practice of getting all current TV seasons available on VOD. That's been a key focus for Meyer for the last couple years, he said. Now, the company puts new content on VOD shortly after it airs on linear. "Typically we get content by 6 am the next morning and make it available on VOD. We've got the top 100 **Nielsen** rated series pretty much the next day," Meyer said. In addition, Comcast is working with programmers to close that same-day gap. "We called it instant VOD. We talked [with programmers] about getting content out sooner." Exactly how soon? Shortly after the episode airs on TV or even minutes after linear debut. "We are making progress," said Meyer. Are programmers onboard? According to the exec, networks are leaning into VOD. "That's the big change we have seen." Some programmers Comcast has been working with are giving all series "stacked," he said. "Networks are realizing that it's getting increasingly harder to attract viewers to tune in on a specific time... VOD is providing a platform for viewers to access and it's open 24/7." A key annual VOD initiative at Comcast is Watchathon, launched 3 years ago when VOD viewing started to pick up steam. The initiative offers Xfinity TV subs access to full seasons of popular shows for free through Xfinity On Demand. As TV viewing on VOD increases, the program is less about "getting someone to upsell **HBO** subscriptions. It's more about getting the audience to discover shows and then catch up on current episodes and ultimately drive ratings growth, said Meyer. And the company has been testing new VOD windowing strategy. It completed a trial with **FX** last year in which viewers can access the next episode of the net's original crime drama "The Bridge" on VOD (with regular ads) after the current episode's linear premiere. The trial, limited to

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Comcast's VOD platform, is an early window strategy that aims to draw viewers to the show and Comcast's VOD platform. Apparently the trial performed well, leading the MSO to start another one with **USA's** "Playing House" Season 2 premiere this summer. The net is using VOD as the primary window, premiering new eps first on VOD before linear airing a week later. USA's ad sales team is seeing more customized spots that are more integrated with the show in the VOD window, Meyer said. The strategy also allows advertisers to target younger viewers with higher income, an important part of Comcast' VOD audience, he said. The company is looking to test the strategy with a couple of other shows later this year. "There is definitely interest around exploring windowing on VOD," Meyer said.

Pop Upfront: While some networks are paring down their upfront presentation this season, others are celebrating it. **Pop**, rebranded from TVGN this past Jan, held its first upfront in NYC Thurs morning for advertisers. The pitch focused on the net's ratings growth. "The big story for us is that if you look at this most recent Q1 and a year ago Q1, we're up double digits. We're up 12% over a year ago. And all of our competitors are down, in some cases down significantly," network pres *Brad Schwartz* told **Cablefax**. So while other networks are declining, why not move some of that money over to a "growing network with a fresh brand... and do it, frankly, more efficiently, since we're less expensive than those other networks," he said. How's it different from other nets with similar pop culture bents? It aims to look at pop culture "through the eyes of the fan," he said, "instead of maybe the affluent way that **Bravo** does it, or the kind of paparazzi way that **E!** does it... or the more urban perspective that **VH1** might take." In all, Pop is producing 300 hours of original programming, or 20% of its slate. The net is bringing back the Daytime Emmys to TV (April 26 8pm/ET) with *Tyra Banks* as host and giving it a new look and feel by moving it out of the ballroom and into the **Warner Brothers** lot. Other highlights include a 2nd season of *Eugene Levy's* "Schitt's Creek" and the collegiate a cappella competition show "Sing It On," executive produced by **Core Media** ("American Idol") and *John Legend's* production company **Get Lifted Film Co**. Upfront guests were treated with a performance from the a cappella band the Vasser Devils and a few words from Levy. More on Pop's programming slate at Cablefax.com.

CBS Streaming Service Scores Affil Deal: CBS's streaming service CBS All Access Video will be able to offer local live broadcast under a deal with affil partners covering 56 markets nationwide. In addition to the deals with **Dispatch, Graham Media, Gray, Hearst, Lilly Broadcasting, Meredith, Morgan Murphy, Morris Network, Neuhoff Media, Nexstar, Raycom** and **Withers**, CBS also reached agreements with additional CBS O&O stations in markets including Atlanta, Phoenix, Orlando, Cleveland, Columbus, St. Louis, Charlotte, Harford, Kansas City and Las Vegas. While specific terms of the agreement were not disclosed, CBS acknowledged that each affiliate partner will participate in a revenue-share and will have live viewership in their markets applied to their **Nielsen** rating. Markets without access to the live streaming offer can access some 7K episodes on-demand via the CBS app, CBS said.

AT&T U-verse Update: AT&T U-verse's 75 Mbps broadband service has rolled out to nearly 90 cities across more than 60 markets in 21 states. The tier was launched initially in Dec in just 4 markets. The telco isn't done yet. The service will be expanded to additional markets, *Bob Bickerstaff*, vp of voice and data products, wrote in a blog post Thurs. The expansion of the speed tier is part of the telco's Project VIP initiative.

WICT's Touchstone Partners: WICT's 2015 Strategic Touchstone partners include **Comcast NBCU, Time Warner Cable, Turner** and **Suddenlink**, the group said Thurs. Its **Catalyst Touchstone** partners include **Accenture, AMC Networks, Arris, Bright House, Cox, Disney and ESPN Media Networks**, and **Scripps Networks Interactive**. Support for WICT initiatives also comes from Inspire Touchstone partners, which include **A+E Nets, Cable One, Cisco, Discovery Comm, HBO** and **Neustar**. The **Walter Kaitz Foundation** funds various gender diversity initiatives and educational scholarships.

Entertainment Studios' New Distribution Pact: Entertainment Studios, which owns and distributes 7 24-hour HD nets, inked carriage deals with 25 new distribution partners, which are largely regional cable and broadband ops. The list includes **Suddenlink** and **Vyve Broadband**, among others.

Comic-Con On Demand: Lionsgate is partnering with Comic-Con International: San Diego on a SVOD service to be launched later this year, the companies said Thurs. The service will feature exclusive original short-form content, films and TV series from Lionsgate and other studios. Archived footage from the expo's 45-year history will also be

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available. The new channel followed Lionsgate's 2 other SVOD services announced earlier this year. It recently partnered with China's **Alibaba Group** to create the Lionsgate Entertainment World platform and is working with **Tribeca Enterprises** to launch Tribeca Shortlist.

Programming: **ITV Studios America** signed a first look producer pod deal with **Hoodlum** for scripted TV series in the US. The production company is based in Australia and will now also be operating out of ITV Studios America's headquarters in LA. -- **Boy George** and **Bunim/Murray Productions** are partnering with Boy George's manager **Paul Kemsley** and producer **Cindy Cowan** to develop a reality docu-series chronicling the icon's move from London to LA.

Philanthropy: **The Garden of Dreams Foundation**, a non-profit that works with **MSG** to help children in need, has launched the Garden of Dreams Inspire Scholarship program, which will award 12 \$10,000 renewable college scholarships each year to high school seniors from the Foundation's partner organizations. The Inspire Scholarships are renewable for up to 3 years or until a bachelor's degree is earned.

People: **Starz** upped **Eric Becker** to svp, corporate communications, **Shannon Buck** to svp, programming publicity, and **Colleen Curtis** to svp, consumer and digital publicity.

Cablefax Daily Stockwatch

Company	04/09 Close	1-Day Ch	Company	04/09 Close	1-Day Ch
BROADCASTERS/DBS/MMDS					
DIRECTV:	87.36	0.60	COMMSCOPE:	26.46	0.17
DISH:	71.61	0.43	CONCURRENT:	6.25	0.14
ENTRAVISION:	6.33	0.04	CONVERGYS:	22.96	(0.16)
GRAY TELEVISION:	14.13	(0.03)	CSG SYSTEMS:	30.35	(0.22)
MEDIA GENERAL:	16.86	(0.21)	ECHOSTAR:	52.70	1.46
NEXSTAR:	58.28	0.01	GOOGLE:	540.78	(0.83)
SINCLAIR:	31.52	0.18	HARMONIC:	7.38	0.02
MSOS					
CABLEVISION:	18.11	0.16	INTEL:	31.24	(0.07)
CHARTER:	190.93	0.15	INTERACTIVE CORP:	72.56	0.04
COMCAST:	59.59	0.41	JDSU:	13.17	0.10
COMCAST SPCL:	59.14	0.42	LEVEL 3:	53.63	(0.59)
GCI:	16.52	(0.31)	MICROSOFT:	41.48	0.06
GRAHAM HOLDING:	1059.54	0.52	NETFLIX:	439.50	(1.85)
LIBERTY BROADBAND:	55.93	0.14	NIELSEN:	45.82	0.21
LIBERTY GLOBAL:	52.02	(0.3)	RENTRAK:	52.70	2.46
SHAW COMM:	23.20	0.04	SEACHANGE:	6.35	(0.01)
SHENTEL:	33.95	0.41	SONY:	29.90	0.38
SHENTEL:	33.95	0.41	SPRINT NEXTEL:	4.93	0.02
TIME WARNER CABLE:	158.81	1.56	TIVO:	11.11	0.17
PROGRAMMING					
21ST CENTURY FOX:	34.36	0.24	UNIVERSAL ELEC:	57.59	0.01
AMC NETWORKS:	76.65	1.11	VONAGE:	4.94	(0.06)
CBS:	61.20	(0.07)	YAHOO:	45.63	0.46
CROWN:	3.94	0.02	TELCOS		
DISCOVERY:	33.21	0.37	AT&T:	32.69	0.04
DISNEY:	106.77	0.41	CENTURYLINK:	35.87	0.37
GRUPO TELEVISIA:	35.42	0.07	TDS:	26.87	(0.18)
HSN:	66.40	(0.23)	VERIZON:	49.01	(0.12)
LIONSGATE:	31.20	(0.25)	MARKET INDICES		
MSG:	83.24	(0.31)	DOW:	17958.73	56.22
SCRIPPS INT:	69.30	(0.88)	NASDAQ:	4974.56	23.74
STARZ:	35.43	0.88	S&P 500:	2091.18	9.28
TIME WARNER:	85.61	0.43			
VIACOM:	69.64	0.96			
WWE:	13.72	(0.08)			
TECHNOLOGY					
ADVANTAGE:	2.34	UNCH			
AMDOCS:	53.98	0.10			
AMPHENOL:	59.30	0.09			
AOL:	39.04	(0.32)			
APPLE:	126.56	0.96			
ARRIS GROUP:	29.52	0.07			
AVID TECH:	15.16	(0.02)			
BLNDER TONGUE:	0.81	(0.01)			
BROADCOM:	43.96	0.99			
CISCO:	27.62	0.07			

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PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

A Theatrical Approach...

We all know it's the Golden Age of Television, but the medium still adheres to decades-long traditions about how shows should look and feel. TV series aren't structured like plays—and there are many reasons for that, including audience expectations, production realities and fears that viewers just wouldn't get it. But **DirectTV's** "Full Circle" series, which just kicked off its 2nd season on March 25 on its **Audience Network**, rejects the notion that you can't import theater elements onto the small screen. The show—in which each episode focuses on 2 characters whose extended, one-on-one interaction also intersects with myriad other plot lines and characters—uses Austrian author and dramatist *Arthur Schnitzler's* century-old "La Ronde" structure rarely if ever used on TV but well known within theater circles. "It's a discipline unlike any other TV show. There's no other television show like this," exec producer/director *Nick Hamm* told us on the set recently. "It's completely unique." The theater-like approach attracted an eclectic mix of actors for Season 2, ranging from *Stacy Keach* to *Colista Flockhart* to *David Koechner*. Koechner, who is known more for his comedic work in movies like *Anchorman* than for a dark revenge/police corruption drama like *Full Circle*, said "the real challenge is that you're doing 22 pages in a day. It's like you're doing a play. You never, ever get a chance to do that. So that is amazing. It's an amazing challenge." And TV/movie actress *Brittany Snow*, who has never done theater, told us that the prospect of memorizing so much for one day of shooting was daunting, but "I really wanted to challenge myself and do something I was afraid of." *Full Circle's* structure isn't for everyone, but it's a fascinating approach that may indeed find a following if *DirectTV* keeps churning seasons out. We'll be watching. [Catch our full interview with *David Koechner* at www.cablefax.com]. - *Michael Grebb*

Reviews: "Lincoln's Last Day," Mon, 8p, **Smithsonian**. It will be 150 years since a single bullet felled President Lincoln at Ford's Theater. Yet more books are written about Lincoln than anyone in American history. *Smithsonian* employs fine historians, re-creation and artifacts from its museums to enhance a richly detailed telling of the plan to decapitate Washington, which resulted in Lincoln's death, the brutal stabbing of Secretary of State *William Seward* and the beating of *Seward's* son (both survived). -- "Cucumber," and "Banana," premieres, Mon, 10p, 11p, respectively, **LogoTV**. From "Queer as Folk" and "Dr. Who" writer *Russell T. Davies* come these inter-related filmic series, each delightful in its own way. "Cucumber" looks at gay life, largely for laughs, yet ep 1 of "Banana" is poignant, a beautiful story about a young girl who falls for a 42-year-old housewife. We're anxious to see more. -- "Game of Thrones," "Silicon Valley," and "Veep," Sun, 9, 10, 10:30p, **HBO**. Talk about a stacked deck. "GOT" starts its fifth season slowly but eventually, er, catches fire. The stakes have risen tremendously in season 4 for *Veep*, where *Julia Louis-Dreyfus* now is POTUS and the scrutiny is continual, as is the pace. A better mix of laughs and spoof, though, is *Silicon*, where the mocking of venture capital becomes central to season 2. - *Seth Arenstein*

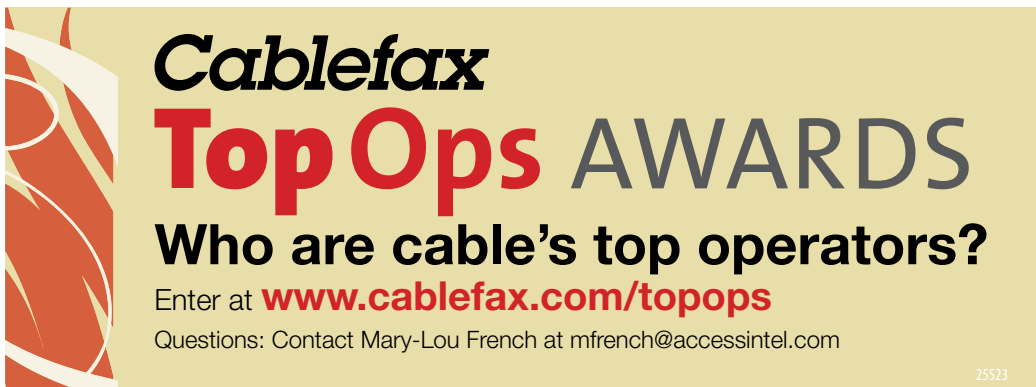
Basic Cable Rankings

(3/30/15-4/05/15)

Mon-Sun Prime

1	TBSC	1.4	3483
2	TNT	0.7	1729
2	USA	0.7	1701
2	FOXN	0.7	1696
5	DSNY	0.6	1593
5	HGTV	0.6	1466
5	HIST	0.6	1401
8	DISC	0.5	1185
8	ESPN	0.5	1141
8	TLC	0.5	1098
8	DSE	0.5	114
12	ADSM	0.4	1091
12	FOOD	0.4	999
12	LIFE	0.4	945
12	ID	0.4	906
12	FX	0.4	892
12	FAM	0.4	857
12	CMDY	0.4	854
19	A&E	0.3	825
19	SYFY	0.3	812
19	NAN	0.3	789
19	SPK	0.3	755
19	AMC	0.3	747
19	ESP2	0.3	725
19	BRAV	0.3	682
19	HALL	0.3	678
19	DSJR	0.3	648
19	MTV	0.3	605
19	HMM	0.3	367
19	BOOM	0.3	327
31	APL	0.2	575
31	TRU	0.2	556
31	BET	0.2	549
31	MSNB	0.2	544
31	TVLD	0.2	516
31	OWN	0.2	510
31	WETV	0.2	491
31	NGC	0.2	489
31	EN	0.2	459
31	CNN	0.2	453
31	VH1	0.2	434
31	DXD	0.2	408
31	TRAV	0.2	400
31	GSN	0.2	396
31	LMN	0.2	373
31	H2	0.2	358

*Nielsen data supplied by ABC/Disney



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