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What the Industry Reads First

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Winter TCA: A Trio of Trends

Has cable television content been turned upside down? A reality star will take up residence in the White House, yet the dearth of cable reality shows in the house during the **TV Critics Association's** (TCA) packed, cable days in Pasadena was noticeable. Certainly there are caveats. TCA is a snapshot, and what programmers decide to show there is a fraction of their slates. In addition, TCA time is dear. Some worthy shows fail to make the cut. Other factors that prevent representative shows from appearing at TCA: the decision to present a show must include the availability of talent, showrunners and directors, etc to attend the twice-yearly media frenzy. Other times shooting hasn't begun on a project and networks are loath to bring shows to TCA that lack the requisite visual accompaniment. Last, cable took just two days at TCA's winter tour this year, down from the three or more it usually occupies. Many cable networks that regularly present at TCA decided to forego it this year. Still, if you're a TV writer in Hollywood, you should be smiling: there's more work than ever. A hint occurred Friday, when *Maggie Malina*, **VH1's** scripted chief, told TCA members, "VH1's presentation today marks the very first time [we've] come to TCA and focus[ed] solely on scripted programming." The two shows VH1 debuted were "The Breaks," a drama about three friends attempting to make it in hip hop in 1990 (Feb debut); and "Daytime Divas" (spring debut), a series based on the novel "Satan's Sisters" by *Star Jones*, chronicling behind-the-scenes machinations of the five female hosts of a daily daytime TV show (yes, sounds like Jones wrote about a subject she knows well). Another wellspring of reality fare, **Spike TV** touted scripted productions, too. "The Mist" (premiere TBD) is a series about an ominous cloud of humidity that causes panic in a small town and stars *Frances Conroy* ("Six Ft Under"). Another trend during this TCA, toward serious stories, was illustrated by Spike's presentation for "TIME: The Kalief Browder Story" (premiere TBD), a 6-part docu series that looks at the story of a young African-American student who spent three years incarcerated at the infamous Rikers Island without being convicted of a crime. The experience apparently led Browder to take his own life after he was released. Even **TNT** seemed to push for semi-serious scripted fare, touting "Will" (debut TBD), about the early, "lost" days of Shakespeare (read: writers can take liberties with the Bard's activities). A clip shown to critics em-

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phasized the mix of serious and light: the setting is Elizabethan England, for sure, but once the action begins, contemporary music is the soundtrack. A third TCA trend, perhaps reflecting the times, centers on stories about the difficulty of making it in today's economy. Examples include **TV Land's** "Nobodies" (March debut), a comedy about three friends desperately trying to get a script produced. Another comedy, **HBO's** "Crashing" (Feb 19), revolves around a comedian (*Pete Holmes*) attempting to make it in NY doing standup after he finds his wife's cheated on him. *Judd Apatow* produces and directs.

Next FCC Head: GOP **FCC** commish *Ajit Pai* was reportedly tapped as the next chmn. Pai has been expected to head the agency as *Tom Wheeler* stepped down Friday. Sen *Ed Markey* (D-MA), a vocal net neutrality backer, quickly sent out a statement: "We need an FCC that protects consumers, promotes competition, and spurs innovation," said Senator Markey. "I will vigorously oppose any efforts by leadership at the FCC to undo net neutrality and broadband privacy rules, undermine E-Rate, or roll back any fundamental consumer protections." Title II net neutrality rules are considered one of the first things the new FCC chmn would look to repeal.

Inauguration Streaming: Video streaming coverage of the 2017 Presidential Inauguration Friday is the largest single live news event that **Akamai** has delivered, the company said. Live streaming peaked at 8.7 Tbps 12:04 pm EST during the opening of the President's speech, exceeding the previous record of 7.5 Tbps set during Election Day coverage on the evening of Nov 8, 2016. At the start of the Inaugural oath, live online video streaming traffic on Akamai hit 7.9 Tbps, and at the start of *President Trump's* Inauguration speech, live online video streaming traffic on Akamai rose to 8.7 Tbps. Akamai supported 4.6mln concurrent viewers of the Inauguration at peak on behalf of its broadcaster customers.

FCC Video Report: The **FCC** released its 18th Video Report last week. The report, based on data collected in 2015, provided an overview of the state of the video market, without concluding whether the market is competitive or not. The report estimated that at the end of 2015, 17.9% of homes had access to 4 competing MVPDs, down from 38.1% in 2014. The change is due to **AT&T's** purchase of **DirectTV** in July 2015, the report said. Also at the end of 2015, cable MVPDs accounted for 53.1% of all MVPD subs, down from 53.4% at the end of 2014. Satellite pay-TV providers accounted for 33.2% of MVPD customers at the end of 2015, down slightly from 33.3% at the end of 2014. Telcos accounted for 13.4% of MVPD customers at the end of 2015, up from 12.9% at the end of 2014. The report found that total MVPD subs declined in 2013, 2014, and 2015. MVPDs lost about 1.1mln video customers in 2015. Specifically, cable MVPDs lost 599K customers, and DBS MVPDs lost 477K, while telco MVPDs gained 14K customers. The good news is MVPD video sub losses have not resulted in video revenue losses. Total MVPD video revenue increased from \$112.7bln in 2014 to \$115.6bln in 2015. However, MVPD video revenue increases have failed to keep up with increased costs. The result has been falling margins on MVPD video services, which were just over 10% at the end of 2015, down from 15% in 2014, and 20% in 2013. The most significant change in the status of competition has been the launch of Sling TV by **DISH** and DirecTV Now by AT&T, the report said. "Competition has also been affected by the increasing number of content owners, broadcast networks, and cable networks launching OVD services. Examples include **Hulu**, **CBS All Access**, **HBO NOW**, **Showtime**, and **Starz**," it said.

Ratings: **History's** scripted military drama series "SIX" debuted to a combined 2.6mln total viewers across History, **A&E** and **LMN**, according to **Nielsen** Fast Nationals (Live+SD). Across the 3 nets, the series scored 1.1mln adults 25-54 and 912K adults 18-49. On History, SIX attracted 1.7MLN total viewers, 739K adults 25-54 and 615K Adults 18-49.

Programming: **TNT** ordered the 6th season of crime drama "Major Crimes" from **Warner Bros. Television**.

People: **Disney** exec *Robert Langer* was named evp and CFO, **Disney|ABC Television**. He will report to *Ben Sherwood*, co-chair of **Disney Media Networks** & pres, Disney|ABC Television. Langer replaces *Peter Seymour*, who, after 20 years with the company, announced his plans to depart the group last November. Previously, Langer was Disney's country manager for Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

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